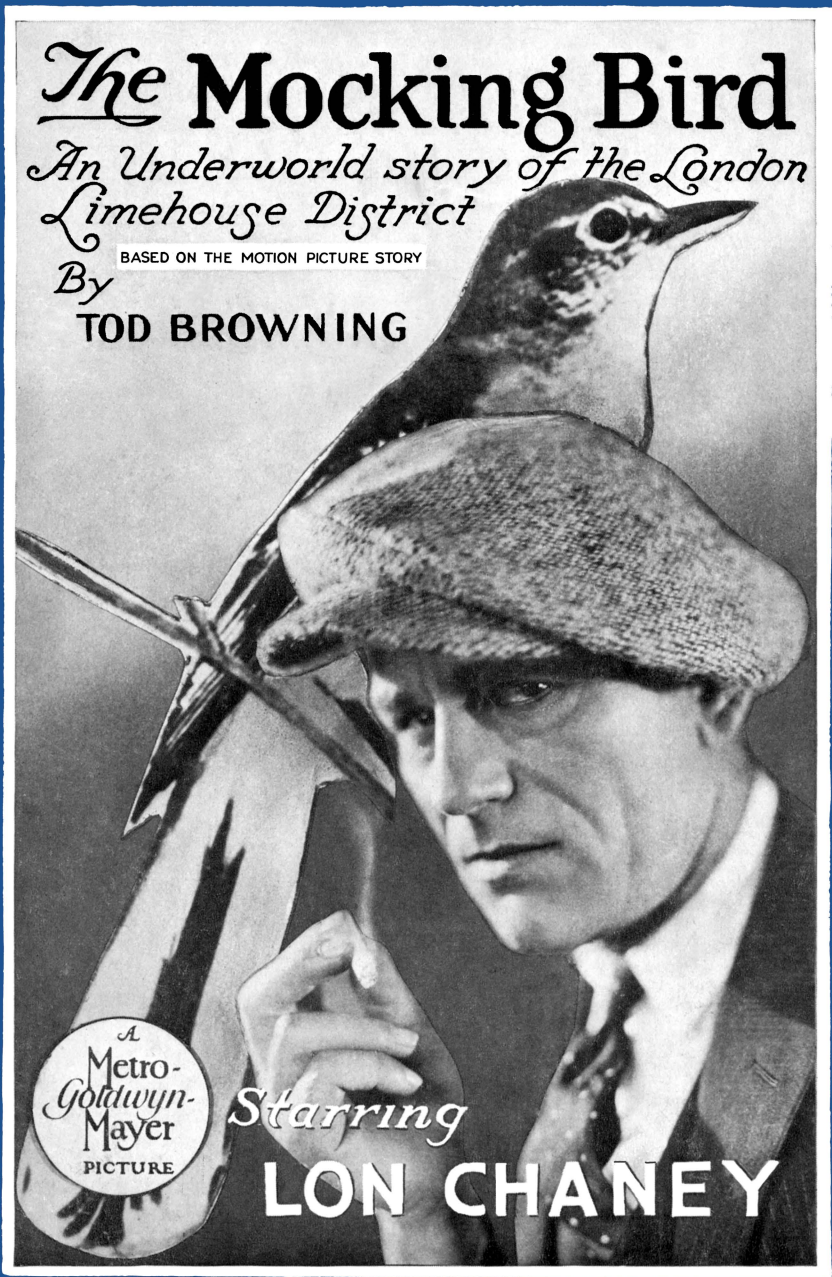


"Popular Screen Library" #2

THIS IS A FREE EDITION OF

"The Mocking Bird"

alternate title for "The Blackbird"

based on the motion picture story by

Tod Browning

Starring Lon Chaney

This is the second in the new *Popular Screen Library* series of cinema books.

If interested in more original movie tie-in novels like this visit

MovingPictureReprintSeries.com

...or browse there using this QR code.

IRVING CUMMINGS presents LON CHANEY
"FLESH AND BLOOD"

Originally published in 1925 by Jacobsen Hodgkinson Corporation, New York.

This reprint was published by Giant Squid Audio Lab Company. Waterford, MI.

Copyright © 2022 by Darren Nemeth

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this book or portions there of in any form whatsoever.

First printing 2022

Cover, text and image retouching by Darren Nemeth.

THE MOCKING BIRD

An Underworld Story of the London Limehouse District

Based on the Motion Picture Story

by

TOD BROWNING

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

Produced and Filmed by

starring

LON CHANEY

JACOBSEN-HODGKINSON-CORPORATION
Publishers
1440 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

THE MOCKING BIRD

CHAPTER I

A BIRD OF PREY

THE thick fog which crept up from the black oily waters of the Thames through the grimy narrow streets of Limehouse was full of hard greedy eyes.

Mascared eyes looked out of the whitened faces of the prostitutes and challenged the slanting lustful ones of men from the ships at the East India docks. Hot gleaming eyes of brown skinned Lascar sailors, bulging white eyes staring from the shiny ebony faces of negroes fresh from the stoke-holds of steamers, furtive grasping eyes in the yellow masks of Chinamen with pig-tails coiled around their heads, swept the pacing women.

The hollow eyes of shabby hungry wrecks of men stabbed eagerly at fruit displayed on stands, glared at fish and potato chips frying in kettles at the curb and peered into the open doors of pubs. Bleary eyes of ragged women watered at the bars of the pubs as they elbowed men for room to reach for glasses of raw gin. The beady eyes of half starved babies glittered from broken prams in the shadows of the doors of the pubs. The sharp clear eyes of hawkers, shouting their wares, watched warily for thugs and thieves,

while they darted from face to face for possible customers.

Menacing eyes watched the passing throng from doorways, following drunken sailors and prostitutes who walked alone.

Through the mingled odors which came on the breath of the fog—odors in which stale beer vied with the pungent smell of frying fish, the aroma of tea and coffee with the stench of baled hides—came the unmistakable muskiness of opium smoked in secret dens.

The sound of fog-horns on the river, the drunken uproar from the bars, the guttural gabble of the Orientals, the harsh shouts of the hawkers, the shrill whine of the shivering deserted babies, all joined with the distant melodies from the music halls to heighten the impression that Limehouse in the East End of London was some nightmare dream of Hades rather than a part of the Capital of the World's Greatest Empire.

Through all the mad phantasy of life in the lower depths, hawkers, prostitutes and thieves preyed on drunks and sailors, thieves preyed on prostitutes and hawkers, pub-keepers preyed on shabby housewives and habby wrecks of men, and thieves preyed on prostitutes and hawkers. Everywhere there was greed and everywhere

there lurked menace. Everywhere hard eyes looked out with greed and lust and sharp eyes kept watchful vigil for danger.

Of late there had been a new name to fear, that of a bird of prey that Limehouse called the "Mocking Bird." In that harsh human jungle, where cunning fattened on loneliness and lust and weakness, and violence fattened on the loot it took from the cunning and the complaisant, the "Mocking Bird's" was a name spoken with admiration as well as fear. For though he took tribute with a violent hand and all Limehouse dreaded his swift sure strokes, he had always escaped the hand of the Law. And in Limehouse the Law was the Great Enemy, the Enemy that threatened its licentious pleasures and the way it lived by looting the stranger within its gates. In the quick folklore which clustered about his name, the Mocking Bird was the David of Limehouse in its never-ending battle with the Great Goliath of the Law.

Like all romantic figures, the Mocking Bird had built up a following, who shared in the evil luster of his name. They included other desperate and able spirits in the arts of crime, and they also included weaklings who served in minor roles as messengers and look-outs. Even the weaklings who served him stirred the dread of Limehouse as his followers.

In its evil fame, Limehouse had forgotten that it had first known The Mocking Bird as Dan Glover. And it had bestowed characteristic names on the members of his gang. Hal Dixon, a thin, hollow-eyed drug addict, who stood shivering at a lamp-post with a cigarette dropping from his lips, was called The Ghost. The sight of Hal eyeing him made Sam Ross, keeper of a fish-and-chips wagon near the East India Dock Road tremble for his day's takings and scan the passing crowd for the sight of a Bobby's helmet. But not a policeman was in sight.

Sam, a wiry little Cockney, forgot to smile at two drunks who were greedily shovelling fried fish to their mouths without the help of forks. Their clumsy efforts to clutch their mugs of ginger beer in greasy fingers failed to amuse him after he caught sight of The Ghost. One of the drunks remarked as his mug eluded him:

"Cripes, it's as slippery and hard to catch as the Mocking Bird!"

Sam startled. He thrust out a hand at the tactless talker.

"Keerful what you say," he whispered with a wicked glitter in his eye. "That's The Ghost, one of the Mocking Bird's gang."

But The Ghost shifted his gaze down the long narrow street and a moment later a woman's shriek rose above the babble of Limehouse noises.

She came running down the street, her hair streaming, her voice shrilly yelling "Police!"

When Sam looked again The Ghost was gone with the crowd behind two Bobbies who had answered the woman's cries. For hours Limehouse echoed with the latest exploit which attributed to The Mocking Bird.

The Bobbies had heard a struggle in the room to which the woman had led them. They had called:

"Open the door in the name of the King!"

They had broken down the door and found a woman with a cloth wrapped over her head and a wallet which she had concealed in her bosom gone.

The room was in wild disorder. A table and a chair had been overthrown. The woman told that she had been attacked from behind and a cloth thrown over her head by a man who had entered her room silently. To all questions she answered:

"I don't know who it was. I couldn't see nor think."

A little Cockney stepped up to the police and said apologetically:

"Beggin' your pardon, it looks to me like the work of the Mockin' Bird."

Meanwhile, as the crowd milled and swayed about the policemen in the street, the Mocking

Bird had slipped over a fence in the dim, fog-laden shadows and disappeared into an area-way. As he melted into the fog in the rear, the Bobbies intercept the Cockney and ask:

"Where can we find the Mocking Bird?"

With a shrug of his shoulders, the Cockney replied:

"Him?" Who knows. He comes an' goes with the fog, he does."

The two policemen talked softly to each other and then made way through the crowd, on their way to a retreat where they expected to find the Mocking Bird. The parting crowd looked after them, and voices expressed the common opinion:

"They'll never pin this on 'im. 'E's too slick for 'em."

But the Bobbies hurried their steps. They knew one place where the Mocking Bird had a room and they were going to lose no time in finding whether he had been at large at the time of the robbery.

The Mocking Bird, too, had hurried. Previous exploits had taught him that swift jobs like this, thefts from women who had made rich pickings from sailors, women attacked from behind and blindfolded had been attributed to him and he expected a visit from the police. In his haste he had had no time to examine his loot.

He reached his haven breathlessly and there,

in the half light, he passed through one room, into a clothes closet. With quick fingers he undid a secret panel in this closet and slipped into a second room. Not until he was in the second room did he open the wallet he had taken. There he found that it contained a wad of bank-notes.

His keen ears caught the faint sound of a hubbub in the street, growing louder and louder. His face hardened to a sinister mask and his eyes became sharp and crafty. In a moment, he knew, the police would be pounding at his door with a mob of the curious, gaping behind them.

CHAPTER II

THE LAW PURSUES

The path of the two policemen seeking the Mocking Bird led to a little Lime House Mission and Refuge. Named "Safe Harbour" and flashing an illuminated sign "Welcome to All," the mission was run by Simon Glover, better known to Limehouse as "The Bishop" and reputed to be the brother of The Mocking Bird.

"The Bishop" was everything that the Mocking Bird was not. Strange, sinister, evil, a creature without a soul, with the lithe body of a panther, the cunning of a serpent, the cruelty of a demon, the Mocking Bird was feared as the "Bishop" was loved. The Bishop was a gnarled, twisted pathetic cripple, who hobbled on a crutch. In his eyes shone an ineffable sweetness which indicated his charitable heart.

At the instant that the Bobbies approached the mission, with the curious crowd on their heels, two old derelicts sat playing checkers in the clean, warm sitting room. A ragged woman with a bleary-eyed baby sat warming herself at the great round stove in the center of the room. All cast affectionate glances at the stairs in the rear of the room, which led to The "Bishop's" living quarters.

The door at the head of the stairs opened and the "Bishop" appeared. The woman held the baby toward him and exclaimed:

"Look at 'im, Bishop, he's alive and well today, thanks to you."

The "Bishop" wagged a finger playfully at the child, who seized it in his claw-like fingers, and the woman leaned forward impulsively and kissed the hand. The "Bishop" disengaged the woman's grasp and went to a cabinet on the wall from which he took a bottle of milk. As he handed her the bottle, the two policemen came into the door.

"Where's Dan?" demanded the first Bobby.

"The Bishop" shook his head sadly.

"Why is it," he demanded, "that man and the law are always ready to condemn?"

"Where's Dan?" asked the policeman, again, a little abashed at "The Bishop's" manner. His companion drew back a little. They plainly respected his good deeds and hated to hurt his feelings, even in the line of duty.

A beautiful smile played over the "Bishop's" face.

"This time," he said, "I am sure my poor wayward brother is innocent."

"How do you know?" the second Bobby asked.

"For the past four hours he has been upstairs

asleep in my bed," he answered with a simple directness which, like his reputation, compelled their belief. They turned and left. The Mocking Bird was safe this time! The mantle of The "Bishop's" good deeds had shielded him from his pursuers.

As they left, the "Bishop" hobbled up the stairs and closed the door behind him.

The eyes of the woman with the baby and the two derelicts followed him lovingly. But on their lips were harsh reproaches for the Mocking Bird. The woman spoke:

" 'E only comes here when 'e's sick or drunk—to mock and jeer at what The Bishop's doing."

But none of them remembered that they had ever seen "The Bishop" and "The Mocking Bird" together.

With the door closed behind him, "The Bishop" threw aside his crutch and, with a wrench that drew a painful grimace to his face, jerked his arm and leg back into normal position. The sweet smile of "The Bishop" faded from his face and it became the hard, cruel mask of "The Mocking Bird!"

Hastily The Mocking Bird tossed off "The Bishop's" garments, a sinister sneer wreathing his hardened mouth.

Completely garbed now in his ordinary clothes the Mocking Bird stealthily opened the door at

the head of the stairway and spotted the two Bobbies in view through the front window of the mission. In his ordinary voice he snarled:

"Gimme my cap!"

Then swiftly changing his voice to the unctuous tones used as "The Bishop," he pleaded:

"Stay in tonight, my brother, and help me give comfort to the afflicted."

The snappish voice of the Mocking Bird followed with:

"Aw, cut out your dam preaching and whining!"

With that he stepped into the main room of the Mission, slamming the door at the head of the stairs viciously. The derelicts and the woman with the baby eyed him covertly, but they said nothing as he strode to the street and cast a defiant look at the Bobbies.

After a few short steps, the Mocking Bird rounded the corner and turned to where the sign of the "Blue Moon Music Hall" was shining through the fog. As he passed the doorway, he almost touched The Ghost, but no glance of recognition passed between the leader of the gang and his drug-addict retainer.

At the moment the "Blue Moon" was the most popular of the low-class concert saloons, a combination of cheap vaudeville theatre and drinking resort with which Limehouse was dotted. At

tables facing the long bar sat the types with which the district abounded. At one table there was a burly prize fighter, plainly the worse for drink, with a broken nose and a cauliflower ear, sitting with one burly arm around the frail wisp of a girl with age-old eyes. Nearby a drug addict sat twitching and scratching. Behind him was a negro shining like lacquered ebony, with a pale prostitute with chalked cheeks and reddened harsh mouth. Just beyond them was a huge sea captain, just in from a voyage, with two women at his table, casting hard eyes on the roll of banknotes he displayed each time he bought a drink.

The Mocking Bird's calculating eyes slowly shifted from one table to the other and took in the panorama of the bar. But for the drink that was in them, that look would have sent an alarm bell tinkling in the bosom of every one on whom it fell. For the gaze was that of a bird of prey, surveying before the swoop.

The Mocking Bird paused halfway down the bar and gazed into the auditorium where the evening's entertainment was already in progress. He took a cigarette and scratched a match on the bar. The bartender stepped up to protest and then, noticing that it was The Mocking Bird who had offended, checked his reproach. Coolly,

contemptuous of the singer on the stage, the Mocking Bird turned and ordered beer.

As the act finished, the crowd burst into jeers and boos, and drove the singer, a broken-down relic of a road opera company, from the stage in tears.

The orchestra whipped itself up with enthusiasm as the manager announced sweepingly:

"I 'ave the extreme honour to announce the return of an old favour-ite, Limehouse Polly."

There was a ripple of applause as Polly entered. She capered gaily onto the stage, a woman still in her thirties, who had been pretty once, and who, tho the hard knocks that life had given her showed in her face, still had a wholesome quality about her. Given a better chance, she would have made a fine wife and mother. There seemed something a little incongruous about her short skirts and comic costume. To sensitive ears, the ribald words she sang jarred a little, coming from her mouth. There was a troubled look which she could not conceal, even when she wrung her hands as if shaking hands with the audience.

Then, all at once, her face brightened. She had caught a glimpse of the Mocking Bird. She sang with a new lilt, a new abandon which brough a wild spontaneous ovation from the audience. But the Mocking Bird turned away his

face coldly. He tossed away his cigarette, turned to the bar and ordered another beer.

One of the old-timers whispered to a newcomer in Limehouse:

"Polly—she's the Mocking Bird's girl. That is, she was. I guess she still loves 'im, but 'e's treated 'er rough. But that don't make no difference to 'er. 'E's still 'er man. She's a good sort, too good for 'im. Many a time 'e's made 'er heart ache for 'er."

The narrow slits of the Mocking Bird's eyes narrowed. The old-timer nudged his companion:

"Look, 'e's thinking up some new deviltry. 'E's made sure there's no Scotland Yard man in the 'ouse and 'e's looking for a new pigeon to pluck."

The newcomer shivered. But the hard face of the Mocking Bird masked his thoughts.

CHAPTER III

DIAMONDS IN DANGER

The applause for Polly's act had not died down in the auditorium when a Rolls-Royce car drew up at the curb before "The Blue Moon." Edward Glayde, man-about-town, faultlessly attired in Tuxedo, with patent leather pumps, and a cloak over his shoulders, stepped from the car and aided Miriam Higginbotham and Josephine Patterson to alight. After them there stumbled from the car the lean angular figure of Lord Cloverdale, a monocle stuck in his left eye.

The women were richly gowned and beneath their swirling opera cloaks The Ghost, standing at the door, caught the glimpse of costly jewels. Miss Higginbotham, the Ghost saw, wore a diamond dog-collar worth many thousand pounds. He followed her hand with swiveled eyes as her fingers, laden with rich rings, adjusted her cloak and again revealed the dazzling diamonds about her white throat. His eyes and those of Edward Glayde, the pleasant dancing companion who had suggested the "little slumming party," sought that dog-collar at the same time. The same appraising look was in the eyes of both of them. But Glayde had his emotions under better control. Beneath the veneer of politeness on his face,

the hot elemental pasisons surged for an expression which he firmly checked.

Glayde has cast but a passing glance at The Ghost, but as he turned to escort the lady of the dog-collar into the door of the Blue Moon, The Ghost dropped his cigarette with a sudden flash of recognition. Edward Glayde, The Ghost suddenly realized, was "West End Eddy," "crook de luxe," son of a Cockney family, who had worked himself high up in the profession of crime and who preyed on susceptible ladies of wealth and position who frequented the gilded hotels and night clubs of the West End of London, the playground of the rich and idle of the Empire.

A moment later The Ghost slipped stealthily into the Music Hall and sought The Mocking Bird. Talking softly and swiftly from the side of his mouth, The Ghost directed the Mocking Bird's attention to the slumming party, for which the proprietor was clearing a table near the stage. In the same guarded fashion, the Mocking Bird whipped out a set of orders, which The Ghost screwed up his face to remember and then quietly slipped away.

Eyes all over the auditorium were riveted on the slumming party as bottles of champagne were brought to their table. A few excited whispers identified West End Eddy and Lord Cloverdale, whose pictures in groups at the Derby had been

recognized. There were stealthy hints at the identity of the women whose jewelled fingers had not escaped attention. As Miss Higginbotham drank more and more champagne her cloak slipped from her white shoulders and exposed the glittering fortune of diamonds in her dog-collar. Eddy kept filling the glasses of his companions, who were too interested in the strange sights they were seeing for the first time to notice that Eddy had still failed to finish his first glass.

The sea captain sent a waiter hastily backstage to summon Limehouse Polly to his table.

But a new announcement from the stage again centered attention there. The manager was crying:

"Fifi Lorraine, the sensytion from Gye Paree, 'eld over for a second week."

A look of new interest came into the hard eyes of the Mocking Bird. He swung around from the bar and thrust his head forward to catch a glimpse of Fifi as she made her entrance. That entrance made Mr. Edward Glayde sit up erect in his chair. The girl was young. She had a figure, opulent hips, sensuous bust, plump arms and narrow waist. Her wrists and ankles were slim. She has a mass of glossy black hair and great black eyes which rolled with a naughty innocence. Piquant and dainty, the life of the music halls had not soiled her yet. She sang

songs in English with a spicy French accent, as if she did not realize the double meaning of the words and busied herself with the mechanical doll which was the excuse for her act. The lips of the Mocking Bird twitched with an overmastering desire as he gazed at her, and West End Eddy sat as if hypnotized, forgetting for the moment the rich jewelry which had led him to plan the slumming party.

Polly came swiftly from the dressing rooms, behind a waiter who led her to the sea captain's table. On her way she had to pass the Mocking Bird, who looked right through her at Fifi on the stage. She stopped and put a hand on his arm. Her harsh voice was soft and throaty:

"Dan," she pleaded. "Ain't you glad to see me again?"

There was a wistfulness in her eye as she looked up eagerly into his face. But the Mocking Bird roughly thrust her hand away. She paused a moment, while the proprietor and the sea captain watched her in amazement. She made a move as if to replace her hand on his arm, but the burning look with which his eyes devoured every movement of the young woman on the stage made her turn aside. Without knowing that she did it, she wiped a little tear from her eye and stumbled after the waiting messenger. The pro-

prietor's lips curled and he spoke under his breath to the sea captain:

"Wotever she could 'a' seen in 'im I can't think."

Polly overheard the words and, half to herself, she murmured:

"It may be I could see the soul in 'im—somethin' 'e didn't know 'e 'ad 'imself."

Her glance lingered after him, as if she were his mother and he were a wayward child. The coarse voice of the captain boomed to break her reverie:

"Come 'ere, Poll."

Even the proprietor shook his head as if to say "Too bad," and the captain blurted:

"Egad, Poll, yer still in love with 'im."

Throwing off her mood, Poll quickly seized a mug of ale and drained it, saying:

"Much good it would do me."

Fifi's act was finished. Riotous applause brought her back for repeated bows. As she took them she noticed the Mocking Bird was leading the applause. Her curiosity was excited.

"Ze mad monsieur—who is he? Every night I see him——" she jabbered.

The stage hand gave her a hint of the Mocking Bird's fame. Her face clouded and she snapped her fingers:

"Zat for him," she cried.

Lord Cloverdale was silly and tipsy. Miss Higginbotham and Miss Patterson were exhilirated by the wine. West End Eddy leaned forward to excuse himself.

"I'll find out what's most interesting to see in Limehouse," he explained. He rose quietly and entered the bar. He drew a cigarette daintily from his monogrammed holder. He stopped to borrow a match from one of the toughs in the bar. As he lit his cigarette he whispered:

"Wait at the corner of Plum Alley and Queen's Lane—work fast—and—get it all."

Another tough standing close by listened eagerly but without apparent interest. Eddy smiled and strolled casually back to his table.

While he was resuming his seat, Fifi came from the dressing room. The Mocking Bird stepped up to intercept her and led her to a table. To her astonishment, he curtly ordered the waiter:

"Champagne."

Her eyes rolled more widely. In their sweep they rested on Miss Higginbotham's dog-collar. The Mocking Bird's glance followed. He leaned forward and whispered:

"Like it? I'll get you one just like it."

"Oo lala!" exclaimed Fifi, all athrill.

The Mocking Bird devoured Fifi with his

eyes. But his tete-a-tete was short lived. Miss Patterson had noticed Fifi in her street clothes. She turned to Gladye.

"I'd like to meet the little French doll," she said. "She's cute as the mischief."

Eddy turned to the waiter and told him that the ladies would like to meet Fifi. It didn't take Fifi long to make up her mind. Though the Mocking Bird half rose to hold her, she jumped up quickly and failed to answer when he pleaded:

"You're coming back, aren't you?"

Eddy made a place for her next to himself. He pulled out a card engraved "Mr. Edward Gladye" and scribbled a few words in pencil:

"I see you like pretty things. May I see you sometime?"

Fifi's fingers closed on the card under the table. She read it surreptitiously and smiled at him. The Mocking Bird saw that smile and rose quickly from his table. At the door he sought the Ghost, standing with Red Allen, another member of his gang. Losing all caution, he twiddled a thumb at Miss Higginbotham and hissed:

"Follow them. Get that dog-collar."

The Ghost and Red faded into the fog.

CHAPTER IV

DESPERATE MEN

After he had given his orders to his men, the Mocking Bird hurried into the auditorium to look for Fifi. He darted here and there impatiently. She was nowhere to be seen. Fifi, half in a daze at attracting the interest of so apparently a cultured and wealthy man as West End Eddy, had wandered into the street when the slumming party rose. A little pang of jealousy had touched her as Eddy had wrapped the expensive opera cloak about the white shoulders of Miss Patterson, hiding the expensive diamond dog-collar. She laughed a little sarcastically to herself at the Mocking Bird's promise to get her one "just like it." And so she missed the Mocking Bird when he came to tell her in his fury at her response to West End Eddy's attentions that soon the collar itself would be in her possession.

Strange thoughts coursed also through the mind of West End Eddy. He thought he had detected the flicker of more than interest in the half-nod which Fifi had given him in reply to his penciled note. But the business in hand made his heart pound and forced him to keep a sharp grip on himself. The glittering loot on women's throats and fingers for which he had been schem-

ing these many weeks was soon to be in his grip if nothing went wrong. But he reflected bitterly there were so many things which might happen amiss to rob him of his plunder. He feared making a false step which would start investigation in his direction, and investigations would be devilishly inconvenient now that he had Fifi to pursue.

Wearied with his rushing, his heart faint at not seeing Fifi anywhere, his nerves jangled by doubts that Red and The Ghost would execute their errand without mishap, The Mocking Bird sank into a seat at a table and called for beer. His eyes had a far-away look in them and he didn't realize that Limehouse Polly had approached him again. She gazed at him with the abject devotion of a dog to a cruel master. She plucked up courage to rest a hand softly on his shoulder. He was sunk too deep in thought to notice her. At last she spoke.

" 'Ullo, Dan," she ventured. "It's two years I been away; did yuh know it?"

But The Mocking Bird only glanced up with cold hard eyes. Then he shook himself free, jumped up, buttoned his coat up to the neck, pulled his cap down over his forehead, threw out his chest and stalked through the bar toward the street. Polly looked after him with just the suggestion of a trembling lip and slouched back

to the sea captain's table. There was a brave attempt at a smile on her lips as she motioned to the waiter.

"Turned me down, 'e did," she muttered. "Let's 'ave another beer."

A few quick strides brought the Mocking Bird back to the Safe Harbour Mission. At its door he spotted one of the Bobbies who had pursued him a few hours before. He touched his cap and engaged the Bobby in conversation, but kept his keen eyes fixed on the forms passing through the fog.

In his agonized attempt to catch another glimpse of Fifi in the Blue Moon he had almost missed his chance to establish his alibi for his next exploit—the theft of the diamond dog-collar and the other jewels worn by the woman of the slumming party, but he had checked himself in time. He felt his pulses drum a little faster as he saw Eddy, Lord Cloverdale and the two gem-laden women turn the corner. Where were The Ghost and Red, he asked himself. But in a flash his quick eyes caught them slipping through the fog, flattening themselves in doorways when the Bobby looked their way. The Mocking Bird kept the Bobby busy talking, while The Ghost and Red ran on tip-toe to a position on West End Eddy's route to the largest opium den in Limehouse. He scanned the alley, his eyes nar-

rowed to pin-points, and noticed in the shafts of light from a pub door the burly figure of a man he had seen in the Blue Moon bar. In a trice the figure disappeared. A sharp question framed in Eddy's mind:

"'oo is that fellow? 'E's a thug all right. What's 'e up to?"

As Eddy's party turned the corner, Red and The Ghost met them with drawn pistols. Eddy's hands went up, almost too quickly, and he cursed himself for making a move so swift that it almost betrayed him. Miss Patterson let out a piercing scream and Eddy looked into the faces behind the guns. This time an exclamation of real surprise escaped his lips, for the men were not the two confederates he had brought from his Tooting haunts, but two strangers, two real Limehouse hooligans!

The newcomers worked fast. The Ghost ripped the dog-collar from Miss Patterson's neck so roughly that the links cut her tender skin.

At the first sound of the woman's scream the Bobby dashed swiftly from the Mocking Bird's side and the Mocking Bird laughed softly. He knew that no policeman could catch Red or The Ghost in the fog. Quickly Red and The Ghost stripped the women's rings from their fingers, and for a moment Lord Cloverdale made a tipsy attempt to move toward them. But, with an

oath, Red thrust his revolver against the stiff bosom of his Lordship's dress shirt and warned him that he'd shoot.

"Don't be a fool," Eddy counselled. And Red and The Ghost dashed off.

They ran plump into the levelled muzzles of the guns of Eddy's men, who caught them unawares.

"Stick 'em up!" they muttered and, caught unawares, The Ghost and Red could do nothing else. The Tooting thieves were systematic. One of them kept Red and the Ghost covered, while the other turned their pockets inside out. They even robbed the Mocking Bird's men of their revolvers and a few pieces of personal silver. To add insult to injury, after taking the diamond dog-collar and other jewelry, the strange thieves tossed Red's prized watch, an engraved one too conspicuous to pawn, into the opening of a nearby sewer.

"Beat it and don't squawk!" the Tooting thieves called after them and darted into an area as Red and The Ghost resumed their interrupted flight. The Bobby was almost on their heels as they turned the corner, and the bullets from his gun whistled uncomfortably by their ears. But the fog was too thick and the lights were too dim, and they knew the district too well to fail in their getaway. Foiled in his pursuit, the

Bobby stopped and Lord Cloverdale and the women circled about him, loud in their complaints. Miss Higginbotham was hysterical. Little drops of blood trickled down her neck from which the dog-collar had been so roughly ripped. Miss Patterson held up her fingers from which the rings had been stripped, and wailed. Lord Cloverdale was maudlin.

"Look here, Bobby," he complained. "Our lives aren't a bit safe. Take us to our motor, what?"

While the Bobby led the women and Lord Cloverdale back to the Blue Moon, where their car was awaiting them, Eddy stepped briskly to Plum Alley and Queen's Lane and whistled softly. His two men stepped out of a doorway and handed him the loot. In another jiffy Eddy was back at the car, doing his apparent best to calm the frightened and hysterical women.

From a nearby lamp-post, the Mocking Bird watched their departure with a sardonic smile, sure that the Ghost and Red were waiting for him with jewelry which, even if he had to give Fifi the diamond dog-collar as he had promised, would supply him with amusements and luxuries for many months, perhaps years to come, without risking his liberty in further escapades. He sneered to see how badly the women took their loss. He sneered a little more to see one of the

swells bend over the woman who had worn the dog-collar. Then he startled. There was something familiar about that face. He racked his brain. Where had he seen it before? Then all at once it came to him—Eddy Gladye, West End Eddy. He got suddenly sick at realizing it.

There was a sibilant hiss from a doorway. The Mocking Bird turned. There was The Ghost. Another glance revealed Red. He joined them and they disappeared up a pair of stairs. By a back way they entered the living rooms in the rear of the Safe Harbour Mission. The Mocking Bird made certain that all the curtains were down and tested the secret panel door with his ears for listeners. Then he turned up the flickering gas jet to full flame and thrust out his hand with a curt:

"Come on with the stuff."

Red turned pale and The Ghost shook. Red was the first to speak, and in short sentences told of the second hold-up by which the strange thieves had robbed them of their plunder. It seemed that the Mocking Bird grew taller. His hard stony face became harder, as hard as steel. He dug his finger-nails into the palm of his hands.

"Find out where West End Eddy lives! Find out tonight!"

And glad to leave that angry presence, The Ghost and Red slipped down the secret stairs.

CHAPTER V

THIEF AGAINST THIEF

At peace with the world, doubly pleased that his men had gotten the loot despite the unexpected raid of local Limehouse talent, soothed by the feel of its weight in the inside pocket of his Tuxedo jacket, West End Eddy devoted himself dexterously to the task of soothing the women. He even suggested unctuously:

"Perhaps we were the ones to blame, putting temptation into the way of people who are hungry."

And in his richly furnished West End rooms, a few hours later, Eddy feasted his eyes on the stolen treasures and took a miser's pleasure in fingering them. His keen mind counted up their probable value in the markets of the underworld and on the diamond curbs of Amsterdam and Brussels after the stones had been taken from their setings. He looked forward to a little jaunt on the Continent with the proceeds. The summer season would be pleasant at Biarritz and Deauville. Winter would be pleasant on the Riviera and he would have a good stake to stack against the bank at Monte Carlo. It was a rich haul! And he would never be suspected, he chuckled. He laughed merrily at the thought of how the Bobbies would harry the known thieves

of Limehouse for the night's job. There was a fellow called the Mocking Bird, who might have some uncomfortable hours, perhaps.

But a suspicious sound put an end to this pleasant train of thought. Like a cat he turned silently and cautiously. The blind of his window was rising. Eddy felt the hair rise on the back of his neck. But before he could reach for his revolver, a figure with a cap pulled over his eyes, The Mocking Bird, was in the room. One hand was in a jacket pocket, thrust out as if it held a gun. With a marvelous swiftness, Eddy thrust his right hand into the pocket of his dressing gown as if about to shoot from the hip.

On their toes, every muscle tense, their faces masked, their eyes fixed keenly on each other's, the two thieves faced. The Mocking Bird was the first to speak.

"Clever way of working," he observed. "Having yourself held up!"

Eddy forced a smile and the Mocking Bird continued:

"But stick to your own preserves hereafter. Don't come down to Limehouse and leave me holding the bag."

Eddy shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you want?" he asked. "Talk business."

TOD BROWNING, DIRECTOR.

"A fifty-fifty split," snapped the Mocking Bird. Eddy hesitated a minute and then smiled.

"All right, suits me!"

"We'll divide here and now," declared the Mocking Bird. Both of them at once dropped the pretense of having the drop on the other. Each reached for the diamond dog-collar.

Eddy smiled. As the suaver of the two, he faced the Mocking Bird down.

"Let's parcel off the little stuff, and then we'll flip a coin for that—eh, what?"

The Mocking Bird nodded. Like Eddy, he had an unconquerable belief in his luck. It didn't take long to parcel off the rings.

While they were setting the rings into two heaps on the table, Fifi came home to her little furnished room near Ludgate Circus. She switched on the lights and fished the card—"Mr. Edward Glayde. I see you like pretty things. May I see you sometime?"—out of her vanity bag. Her eyes grew luminous and she began to hum.

And as the picture of West End Eddy in his faultless Tuxedo flickered before her eyes, The Mocking Bird thrust his rings into his pocket and cast a covetous glance on the dog-collar.

"Flip a coin?" he asked.

Eddy nodded yes, and asked:

"Call it!"

"Tails."

The coin, a half-sovereign, went into the air. Two eager pair of eyes followed it as it struck and settled.

Tails it was, and the Mocking Bird, the winner, pocketed the dog-collar and went out of the window again into the night, thinking of tomorrow and Fifi. Eddy whistled and poured himself a drink of Scotch. And as he raised the glass to his lips, he, too, was thinking of Fifi and tomorrow!

The Mocking Bird was the first to arrive the next evening at the Blue Moon Music Hall. Eagerly he waited for Fifi's act. When he saw her come on the little stage his parted lips, his burning eyes revealed the fever for her which burned his body with a consuming fire. Close at hand he saw a Limehouse rounder buying flowers for a drunken courtesan whose black hair showed beneath her awry blonde wig. It gave the Mocking Bird an idea. He had always scorned the flower sellers, but tonight, the warm flame of a new love, if the Mocking Bird could be said to feel anything like love in his cruel heart, had transformed him. While he was weighing the idea of buying flowers, Polly passed.

"'Ullo, Dan!" she said timidly, noticing the Mocking Bird Gazing at the flower girl. A smile of joy transfigured her as he said:

"Wait a minute."

She grew bashful and tender as he selected a little bouquet, touched by the thought that the Mocking Bird had melted and was buying flowers for her to make up for his gruff greeting of the night before. She drew near to caress him. She bowed her head and her eyes grew moist as he handed the flowers to her, a lifetime of devotion shining out of her eyes.

But when the Mocking Bird looked up at her coldly, after paying the flower girl, and spoke to her, she cowered as if he had struck her with a whip, for in a voice which showed that he looked upon Polly merely as a messenger, she heard him say:

"Put them in her dressing room. Tell her I want to see her. I've got something for her."

But she checked her tears and pulled herself together.

"All right, Dan," she said bravely and hurried off on her errand.

As she went, the Mocking Bird could not keep his fingers off the dog-collar. He even took the desperate chance of drawing it out so that he could look at it slyly.

Polly was putting the pitiful little bouquet, which she would have valued so highly for herself, into a vase on Fifi's dressing table, when West End Eddy, in a faultlessly cut business suit, entered the Blue Moon bar.

"He'll be waiting out at a table," Polly said, assuming, of course, that Fifi knew the flowers were from the Mocking Bird. But foolish Fifi, her heart full of thoughts of West End Eddy, the "swellest gentleman" she had ever seen, assumed the flowers were from him, and when she caught sight of him at a table well forward, where he had been seated by the obsequious proprietor just before she came on the stage for her act, she smiled gaily at him, ignoring the Mocking Bird, whom Eddy had invited to the table. Eddy tried his best to establish the basis of a truce with the Mocking Bird on his own territory.

"I'm not trespassing on your territory tonight, old chap," he explained. "It's just a little personal affair that brought me here."

The Mocking Bird's expression relaxed. He, too, would show that he could be no less urbane than the West End crook.

"Have a little drink?" he suggested.

Eddy nodded and the Mocking Bird called a waiter.

There were further drinks as Fifi finished her act, and soon in street attire, she emerged from the dressing room carrying the Mocking Bird's bouquet. Eddy rose to greet her, but the Mocking Bird, not so accustomed to fine manners, remained seated and motioned her, with rough cordiality, to

"Have a seat."

Eddy placed a chair for her and sat down, taking the place between her and the Mocking Bird. Fifi began to chatter gaily to Eddy, ignoring her other admirer entirely. A puzzled wrinkle came across his forehead. What was the matter with the girl. Hadn't she come to the table because he sent for her Wasn't she carrying his flowers, and hadn't Polly given her his message? Of course! Polly wouldn't dare disobey him. The look in the Mocking Bird's eyes became a wicked glare. And as he saw Fifi take a flower from her bouquet and put it with fussy little feminine coquetry into Eddy's buttonhole, they took on the red-hot flaming tinge of murder. The arrival of the waiter, with another round of drinks for Eddy and himself, gave the Mocking Bird a chance to interrupt their hateful tete-a-tete with a

"What'll yuh have?"

And after giving her order, Fifi again deliberately turned her back on him.

Another flower girl passed the table. Eddy motioned to her and spoke to Fifi.

"Pick out some better flowers," he suggested. "Get a fresh bunch. Yours look wilted."

And the two of them fingered over the little bunches, while the Mocking Bird fumed and glared. At last they made their selection and Eddy paid the flower girl. Fifi chortled with glee. Eddy reached for the bouquet the Mocking Bird had bought.

"You don't want these any more now," he said, and with a casual flick of his wrist he tossed the Mocking Bird's present ignominously into a cuspidor.

A grimace as of unbearable pain flickered over the Mocking Bird's face as Fifi reached over and removed the flower she had first placed in Eddy's buttonhole and replaced it with a fresher bloom, this time with even greater tenderness. And when he looked at Eddy again, he could scarcely veil the murderous hatred which poisoned him. As though in a trance he heard what Eddy and Fifi said.

"Let's go to one of the night clubs and dance," suggested Eddy, "if you have no other engagement."

And Fifi's silvery voice replied:

"Nozzing, M'sieu, nozzing I care about."

The waiter brought Fifi's drink and the Mocking Bird paid for it. But Fifi didn't stop to drink it. When the Mocking Bird asked her if she didn't want to drink it, she replied:

"No, zank you, good-night!"

As they went out the door, the Mocking Bird sent the inoffensive glass crashing to the floor.

CHAPTER VI

ROMANCE AND MENACE

West End Eddy had played at love a thousand times, and in playing the game he had learned the little arts that win the hearts of women. This time, for the first time in his long experience as a heart-breaker, his own heart was involved. He threw himself fervently into his courtship of Fifi. With sincere devotion he paid her the little compliments, the delicate attentions which had captivated others. But even if he had not been a consummate lady-killer, Fifi, ardent, wholesome young creature that she was, could not have failed to respond to the ardor of his pasison. At bottom West End Eddy was not wholly bad. Evil environment had started him on sharp practices and the good in him was nearer the surface than in the Mocking Bird. Love for Fifi, honest, true, wholesome devotion, brought out the best that was in him, made him renew his youth, made him hate his manner of living, made him resolve never to resort to some of his old tricks in the future. At first he sought to dazzle Fifi with the glittering glories of the expensive night clubs. He fairly staggered her one evening by taking her to the Grafton Galleries, near Buckingham Palace, where the Prince of Wales frequently came

to dance to the airs of an American band drilled by Paul Whiteman. But in the end he came to court her simply, and Fifi herself found her greatest pleasure not in surroundings, like those of the Grafton Galleries, but in the simpler joys of quiet outings in the country and the parks.

And on one of those simple outings West End Eddy's love moved him to an outburst of confidence concerning himself. He could not win, crook that he was, the love of Fifi under false pretenses. It happened when they were in a little flat-bottomed skiff in a tranquil lake in one of the London parks. Fifi was leaning back in his arms, tossing popcorn from a bag to a lovely long-necked white swan which dipped gracefully for the floating bubbles which rivaled her own whiteness. Wearing a charming little sports suit, placidly happy, she lost the look of calculated naughtiness which was her greatest asset on the stages of the cheap concert saloons. The happiness of love had transformed her, as it had transformed Eddy. And as the swan came up to thrust its head into the bag of popcorn, the way seemed easy for Eddy to hint at his thieves' mode of life. All at once he blurted out:

"That's the way I get what I want—I take it."

Fifi stopped chiding the swan with a little "naughty, naughty," and looked at Eddy with a smile. She held up her left hand with a beautiful

platinum-set diamond solitaire on its third finger —her engagement ring.

"So that's the way you got this?" she asked.

Eddy nodded and then added hastily:

"Yes, but I had the mounting changed, so it wouldn't be recognized."

Fifi sighed. Eddy scrutinized her eagerly to see how she took the revelation. Would her love stand the shock of learning that he was a crook?

Her brows were knitted with reflection. She looked at the ring. It meant so much to her—Eddy meant so much to her—that she couldn't return it even after she knew it was stolen.

In rapid short sentences Eddy made amends. He apologetically excused himself for his manner of life. He poured out vows of reform. He told Fifi that love for her had made his old life hateful now. He promised for her sake to go straight. And Fifi, with exquisite tact, restored his poise by saying:

"Then what I want, you get, n'est ce pas?"

But the cloud of the Mocking Bird's jealousy and hate hung lowering over the happiness of the lovers. Ever since the day that Fifi had humiliated him by leaving him in the Blue Moon Music Hall for Eddy, thoughts of hate and revenge had smouldered in the Mocking Bird's heart. His friends and followers found him sullen and touchy. And Polly, his faithful dis-

carded sweetheart, who knew him best of all, who believed in spite of everything he did to others, in spite of everything he did to her, that he had a soul, that underneath his cruel exterior there was hidden a kernel of secret goodness, feared that his new mood would give birth to some hideous deed. Fear of what his snarling madness might lead to forced Polly to brave his wrath and seek him in his room after he had been absent from his old haunts for days.

He snapped at her.

"What you coming bothering me for?"

Polly studied him with deep concern. She fingered her skirt and then at last she looked him full in the eye.

"I know you so well, Dan," she said, "that I know you're planning something devilish about those two and I don't want you do anything you'll be sorry for."

The Mocking Bird snorted contemptuously. He had never been sorry for anything. Getting caught was the only thing to be sorry for, and he hadn't been caught yet and didn't mean to be. The sneer was still on his lips as he snarled:

"You want to save 'em, huh!"

Polly looked at him long and steadily. She was calm, but determined. There was an attempt in her voice and manner to conciliate him, but her attitude was one of having right on her

side, one speaking with a first hand knowledge of life, one who was sure of the philosophy which she had come by in bitter contact with the world.

"I want to save *you,*" she said impulsively, "to save YOU from yourself, from Gawd knows what."

But a chilling derisive laughter which would have curdled the blood of a stranger, so fiendish and diabolical it was, cut her short, although it did not frighten her.

"Dan! Dan!" she remarked sadly, "Why can't you turn over a new leaf and live the way 'The Bishop' and I want you to? You'd be happier."

The Mocking Bird grinned more amiably. It flattered his vanity that his dual personality had deceived so clever a woman as Polly and one who knew him so well in both characters. For the moment Polly forgot her fears for Fifi. She had come to love the jolly little French girl. She had lost all the resentment she felt toward her when the Mocking Bird so plainly showed his preference for Fifi. She had seen the transformation which love had wrought in Fifi's heart with fond memories of the dawn of her own romance for the Mocking Bird. Polly knew what it was to love a crook. She had felt the pangs of lying awake at night trembling with thoughts of pursuits by the police, of dangerous and desperate deeds from which there might be

no return, of the peril that old crimes would be detected and pop up to separate her from her lover. She felt a maternal tenderness for the girl. She passionately wanted Fifi to have the happiness which had been denied herself, and she knew how ruthless and revengeful the Mocking Bird could be. And so she had pocketed her pride and sought him sulking in the rear rooms of the mission to plead that she should leave the lovers unscathed by his wrath. In his worst moments she believed the Mocking Bird capable even of the lowest form of vengence in the underworld, the betrayal of his rival, for some past offense into the hands of the police. Such an event, Polly was sure, would break Fifi's heart and send her down the road to ruin which was so close at hand for every girl on the concert saloon stage.

During the dark days when hate swelled in his heart and jealousy gave rise to plans of murder and revenge, the only relief that came to the Mocking Bird was in those hours when he played the part of the good "Bishop" of the Safe Harbour Mission. When he jerked his arm and leg out of joint and twisted his neck awry, it was, each day, with a cynical sneer. But once he had contorted his face and body, and donned the "Bishop's" semi-clerical garb, he took pride in his impersonation. It was queer he thought how

playing at good deeds made him feel really good. One could not smile and do good deeds he found without being influenced by them. Playing at love of his fellow men, he came actually to feel a sympathy which was utterly foreign to his other attitude of looking upon them all as possible victims. When he was advising and assisting poor mothers with sick children, old men out of work, convalescents needed care and rest, even repentant Magdalens home-sick for the loved ones they had disgraced, he actually felt benevolence in his heart.

But there always came the inevitable revulsion, when he assumed his proper form. He laughed satanically to think how fools had given him a clerical title, because he wore clothes patterned after those of a non-Conformist clergyman. And as his laughter grew deeper, his eyes took on a fiendish glare as he promised himself a devilish satisfaction by a cunning and cruel trick on Fifi and her lover. He sat on the edge of his cot and rehearsed the manner of his triumph.

CHAPTER VII

INTO CRUEL HANDS

West End Eddy's confession to Fifi that he had made his living by his wits in devious ways which had brought him into danger from the law cleared his courtship of the deceit which had tainted it. More and more he and Fifi became the typical engaged couple, looking forward to a quiet wholesome life, in modest surroundings. The garish waste of night life, which had brought Eddy into a career of crime was now thoroughly distasteful to him. Eddy wished he could erase the memories of his past affairs with women from his mind and that he could start his married life with Fifi as clean and pure as she. He was eager to become, for the first time in his checkered life, a figure that he had always despised and laughed at, a husband. And in the happy moments that he and Fifi spent together on their outings he persuaded her that they should be married at once. Like two cockney sweethearts they discussed the details. Fifi snuggled in his arms as he talked.

"It can't be a church wedding, I guess," he said, thinking that for a simple love like theirs, ostentation would be hypocrisy.

"And as for a Magistrate," he went on, shrugging his shoulders and avoiding the oral expression of the distate which his past career had given

him for Magistrates. He didn't want to have his marriage started under circumstances which would carry the hint that he was being sentenced to something, instead of freely embarking on a momentous adventure.

Fifi thought that being married by declaration in a registry office was horrid and formal and so they gave up that idea. Eddy agreed that the registry office was all right for folks who had been divorced and could not get a clergyman to bless their union. At last Eddy said, with a half serious twinkle in his eye:

"We'll find some little out of the way place. Leave it to me!"

The next morning Eddy got the marriage license, permitting Edward Glayde of London, England, and Fifi Lorraine, spinster, of Paris, France, to be married anywhere in London. Fifi clapped her hands when Eddy brought it to her lodgings and then she bowed her head and wept. Drying her tears she quickly tucked her hair under her hat and followed Eddy to the street. He stopped a bus and they climbed on the top deck, watching the traffic as the great bus slowly passed St. Paul's. Holding Eddy's hand clasped tightly in the two of hers, Fifi cried when they passed through Cheapside:

"Where are we going? Isn't this the way to Limehouse?"

Eddy nodded.

"Yes; there's a little mission there, the Safe Harbour, run by a nice chap, 'The Bishop,' that's always doing good turns for folks that made false steps and helping them to turn to the right. Now I'm going on the right road, I figured it would bring me luck to have him start me off."

And Fifi's grip on Eddy's hand became tighter.

An old bum was cleaning the stove in the main room of the mission when Fifi and Eddy entered. He pocketed the silver shilling that Eddy gave him and doffed his hat.

"Sure, I'll tell the Bishop ye want to see 'im directly, sir!" he said.

The attendant rapped at the door at the head of the stairs. The muffled voice of the Mocking Bird answered:

"What d'ye want?"

"Somebody to see the Bishop?"

"Who is it?"

"A lady and a gentleman sir, a real swell gentleman in a Prince Albert coat, sir."

"All right, I'll tell him."

Business—perhaps a contribution, grinned the Mocking Bird to himself, throwing off his street clothes. With a terrible effort he threw his arm and leg out of joint again, twisted his neck and then put on his mission garments as The Bishop. Then he seized his crutch and came slowly out of the door, with his unctuous "Bishop's" smile

on his face. He nearly lost it to see West End Eddy standing before him, dressed as for an afternoon tea party at the Piccadilly. He frowned just a trifle, but his control reasserted itself quickly, to see Fifi standing there in a smart little frock. He scanned Eddy's face keenly. He knew Eddy for a shrewd fellow. Had Eddy by any chance suspected that the Bishop and the Mocking Bird were one and the same person? A hot flash coursed through him as he remembered how on the occasion of their first meeting with Fifi he had been horribly humiliated by the two of them. But his darting glance convinced him that Eddy was thinking of other things and had not penetrated the secret of his dual personality. He got impatient.

"And what do you want of me?" he asked a little impatiently in his Bishop's voice, remembering his apparent character.

Eddy handed him the marriage license. It was lucky he had the crutch to support himself and remind him that he was not the Mocking Bird. Inner resentment gave way to sardonic clandestine laughter that a clever one like Eddy accepted him as a clergyman. But he must think quickly. Matters had come to a pretty pass when these two had gone so far as to consider marriage. Eddy must be gone indeed on her to want to marry her. And she, his gaze assured him, was the typical young blushing bride. The

thought of Fifi in Eddy's arms cut the Mocking Bird like a sharp sword. But in his character of Bishop, the Mocking Bird fingered the wedding license and said with apparent calm and deep concern:

"I know of you, sir, of your career. But does the young lady know?"

Eddy nodded yes, and turned to Fifi for corroboration.

"Oui, oui, monsieur," the would-be bride replied, indicating by the bright airiness of her answered that she had long ago considered and dismissed the subject.

The Bishop (Mocking Bird) stepped back, a little shocked in both his characters by this development. But he was still determined to do his dirtiest to prevent the match. He affected an air of great seriousness, which communicated itself to Fifi who frowned a little for the first time.

"Then you're prepared," he went on, "to marry a man who might be snatched from your arms on your wedding night to go to prison?"

He pierced her with his eyes for her answer. He felt a pride in that thrust, knowing how she had repulsed HIM when she first came to the Blue Moon because of his reputation as a leader of a band of thieves. Fifi felt real panic now, and she seized Eddy's arm and clung to it desperately. Eddy's face was pale and serious.

He too was shaken by the Bishop's vivid presentation of the Sword of Damocles which always hung over his head for deeds done in the life he meant to put behind him.

But when the Bishop's eyes, fixed on her, demanded an answer to the harsh question, she braced herself at Eddy's side and said firmly:

"I'd wait for him, monsieur, wait till he come out, if it is a hundred year."

The Bishop (Mocking Bird) trembled a little at that answer, but Eddy straightened up. The words of his sweetheart had crystallized and perfected his love, and put a ramrod in his resolution that, God help him, this little woman, true blue all through, should never suffer through any future deed or word of his.

But the Bishop was not done. He looked at Fifi steadily and suggested another menace to her happiness.

"He must have enemies," he went on. "HE MIGHT BE KILLED!"

The room boomed with the throaty tones of what was a warning from the Bishop, a threat from the Mocking Bird. But the quick, half involuntary reply which burst from her lips killed every hope of the Mocking Bird that Fifi might yet be his.

"I'd kill myself," she shrieked. She threw her arms about Eddy and hugged him hysterically. And Eddy clasped her to him and tried to

comfort her. While their eyes were off him, the Mocking Bird gritted his teeth and clenched and unclenched his fingers. Hot sparks of hate flashed from his lowered eyes, but as they looked toward him again, he put on again the soft bland smile of the Bishop. He appeared to bless her pleas:

"You mus' not steal no more, my sweet, I couldn't live, promise, promise!"

And Eddy promised, and the Bishop smiled benignly. But as they hugged and kissed, all oblivious to him, the hard brutal ugliness of the Mocking Bird came on the Bishop's face again.

"I promise," Eddy was saying, and Fifi's arms went around him in a convulsive hug of joy, and they sealed the promise with a longer kiss.

As the kiss ended, the Mocking Bird suffered a spasm of jealous pain which rose to a murderous hate. If he had been a bird of prey, then his talons would have struck in Eddy's throat. But as they turned he made a supreme effort and was the kindly Bishop again.

The love scene over, Eddy bowed apologetically to the Bishop.

"Well, now that's settled, read the marriage service. I have the ring as well as the license and that's why we came here."

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARING A TRAP

The Mocking Bird in his capacity of "Bishop" was taken back both by Eddy's promise to reform and Fifi's failure to respond to his efforts to dissuade her from marriage to his rival. And he was still further abashed when Eddy said solemnly, holding his bride-to-be tight in his arms:

"You've done a great day's work, showing us the way to real happiness."

Fifi overwhelmed the false "Bishop" with her gratitude. Echoing Eddy's words, she said:

"It ees so, Monsieur."

With it, she rushed impulsively to him and kissed him on the forehead. Strange sentiments stirred in the Mocking Bird's bosom at that kiss. He planned a fiendish scheme not only to delay their marriage, if he could not prevent it, but to separate them and destroy their faith in each other. But Eddy was impatient for the ceremony to proceed. He reached in his waistcoat pocket for the wedding ring and looked up as if puzzled by the delay.

But the Mocking Bird still sparring for time picked up the marriage license from the table, looked at it and put it down again. Then he hobbled, in his gnarled, crippled Bishop's form, over to Eddy's side and put his hand on the would-be bridegroom's arm. He had achieved a perfect picture of kindly piety. There was a mis-

leading look of kindliness in his eyes. There was a pleading softness in his voice. He seemed full of human sympathy and rectitude.

"Wait!" he said. "Marriage is a sacred contract! Try first to right the wrongs you've done. Give back what belongs to others."

At that moment elevated and exalted by his wonderful love for Fifi, Eddy was prepared to do anything to start his new life in wedlock with her clean and straight and pure. The idea of restitution suggested by the Bishop accorded with his idealistic mood. But he realized the difficulties and dangers of the course. He was impatient of further delays to the wedding. And so he hesitated. But Fifi whose word was his law decided his answer for him. She felt the force of what the false Bishop was saying. She nodded her head slowly at Eddy and told him:

"Yes, we mus'."

Eddy's brow wrinkled with thought as to the best method of returning what loot he still had in his possesion. He didn't know how to give it back without risking his liberty. Then an idea occurred to him. He put the wedding ring back in his pocket and said:

"All right, Bishop. I'll bring everything I've got to you. If you can help me, I wish you'd see that it gets back to its owners. You understand that I can't do it very well myself."

The Bishop nodded his head in acquiescence.

Eddy and Fifi turned to go. Then Eddy remembered the marriage license. He turned to take it from the table but the Bishop stopped him, with a gentle gesture, picking it up himself and holding it.

"Leave it here in my care," he urged, and Eddy let him keep it. The Bishop hobbled after them to the door of the Mission and opened it for them. As they bade him good-bye, he said:

"Any time I can be of service, any hour of the day or night, call on me."

They thanked him and left. He closed the door behind them, holding the marriage license in one hand. As they turned from the door to go down the street toward East India Dock Road, the bland smile of the Bishop faded from his face and he shot after them a look of malignant hate, which he focussed on them till they were out of sight. As they passed from his view he walked back through the Mission and up the stairs to his room, where a fire was burning briskly in the grate. With a gesture of disgust, he tossed the marriage license in the flames and stood chuckling until it was consumed.

Then with a herculean effort the Bishop threw his arms and legs back into position and was the Mocking Bird again. More swiftly than he had moved before, he half darted across the room and opened the drawer of a cabinet and drew out the setting of the diamond dog collar. It was a

shell of its former self. The empty prongs showed how the dazzling gems had been pried from it with a jeweler's tool.

With a diabolical grin, the Mocking Bird started printing on a sheet of plain white paper:

"Go to 17 Totten St. W. C. and ask West End Eddy to put the stones in this."

He wrapped the note about the diamond dog collar shell and quickly made a little package which he addressed also in print:

"Chief Inspector, Scotland Yard, London."

He snatched up his cap, thrust the package in his pocket and hurried to the street. As he approached a mail box he dropped the package in it, after first looking in all directions to make sure he was not observed.

And when he heard the package drop into the box, his features showed a fiendish grin.

A few hours later the package was delivered to Scotland Yard. A grizzled inspector opened it and his widely opening eyes showed that he recognized it as the piece which had been stolen from Miss Higginbotham on the night Eddy had taken her with Miss Patterson and Lord Cloverdale on their ill-fated slumming trip. The inspector pushed a button on his desk sharply and Grey, one of his trusted men, entered and approached the inspector's desk. After a talk the detective said:

"Yes, sir; it's very probable. It's certainly worth looking into. That's the way he'd work.

The Glayde fellow who was with them was undoubtedly West End Eddy. Strange it didn't occur to anyone to investigate him, but the women had such confidence in him, and he was so intimate with Lord Cloverdale. I'll bring him in for questioning, Sir."

And so it happened on the very day West End Eddy had promised his beloved Fifi that he would forsake forever his evil life, a few hours after he had assured the false Bishop with all the fervency of a heart purified by love, that he would atone for his criminal past by making restitution of his loot, the wicked Mocking Bird, who had induced the promise and the assurance had started the machinery of the law against him.

"Be careful of yourself, Grey," the inspector warned. "He's a slick article and may resort to violence to escape."

"I'll be armed, Chief," Grey replied.

Although Eddy had no suspicion that the Bishop was his rival, the Mocking Bird, and had betrayed him, he was in no frame of mind for murder, or shedding blood. The passionate cry of Fifi that she would wait a hundred years for him, if the Law should snatch him from her arms to prison, would have kept Eddy from adding an assault or slaying of an officer of the law to his evil deeds.

But Eddy's new found obedience to law, his newly born philosophy of goodness, was to avail

him nothing. For almost at the moment that Detective Grey started for Eddy's rooms on Totten Street, the Mocking Bird was on his way to the rear area way across which he had made his hair raising entrance to the same place on the night that the diamond dog collar was twice taken at the point of pistols.

Catlike, the Mocking Bird climbed the trellis and stood on the coping which ran along the side of the floor on which Eddy's rooms were situated. He did not mind the rain which beat down on him. He was glad that there was no moon and that the black clouds of the storm hid him. He glued his ear to the window and listened to his rival for Fifi's love move about the room. He scowled to hear Eddy whistle cheerfully, and when he heard a knock on the door and Eddy stop whistling, he drew a revolver from his pocket.

"Open in the name of the King!" the words of Detective Grey were music to his ears. He heard Eddy go to the door. Slowly and silently he raised the window. Just as the detective's form was silhouetted in the light, the Mocking Bird took careful aim and fired. The detective fell heavily and the Mocking Bird went down the trellis and disappeared across the area way into the storm as stealthily as he had come.

Wounded as he was, Grey drew his revolver and commenced to shoot. His aim was wild and

Eddy ran toward the open window and out into the night.

The sounds of the shooting drew a crowd of the curious, followed by two Bobbies. Lying on the floor in a pool of his blood, the Bobbies recognized Grey. One of them ran to call an ambulance. The street reverberated with the cry:

"Scotland Yard man's been shot."

Weak from the loss of blood, Grey told the surgeon:

"West End Eddy shot me. Made his getaway out of that window."

The surgeon made a hurried examination and declared:

"You'll get over this. You're lucky. He just missed a vital spot."

One of the Bobbies reached for the telephone and got Scotland Yard.

"Send out a general alarm for West End Eddy! He's shot Grey, one of your men, in his rooms at 17 Totten Street and made his getaway."

"I warned Grey to be careful, that West End Eddy'd be desperate," complained the inspector. "But by tomorrow his picture will be on every boarding and in all the pictorial newspapers and we'll have all the Channel steamers watched to prevent his making his getaway to the Continent. He'll get ten years penal servitude for this alone, not counting what he'll get for everything else we'll fasten on him. He can't get away."

CHAPTER IX

TREACHEROUS REFUGE

Hatless, coatless in the storm, desperate over the horrible misfortune which had followed a day of supreme happiness and good resolutions, Eddy darted hither and thither, eluding passers-by in frantic fear. His frenzied mind couldn't solve the puzzle of how Grey had been shot. He didn't know whether the detective was dead or alive. He feared the worst. Before his fevered eyes, he saw a picture of himself with the black hood over his head, standing on the trap beneath the gallows tree, and then his body dangling in the noose. He pictured poor Fifi's grief. He remembered, with a stab at his heart, her words of the morning, when the Bishop had hinted of his death at the hands of enemies:

"I'd kill myself."

Like a child seeking its mother, like a pigeon seeking its cote, Eddy's wanderings brought him to the door of Fifi's apartment. He rapped and woke her. She came trembling to the door and he begged her to admit him. His voice told her he was in trouble and she slipped on a dressing gown and admitted him. She stroked his sopping-wet head. She patted his soaking garments and she noticed the wild look of terror and distraction in his eyes.

"My poor boy," she cried. "Wot 'az 'appen?"

Quickly he told her. She wrung her hands in excitement and horror.

"I didn't shoot him," he cried desperately. "I didn't shoot him. Oh, my God!"

And Fifi believed him, hard as it was to believe for hers was the perfect faith of love. But something still puzzled her, despite her full confidence in the story as he told it.

"But why did you run?" she exclaimed. "That was bad. Why, oh why, did you run?"

He shook his head. He started to pull the jewels, which were his share of the Limehouse slumming party, out of his pockets. He put them on the table before her.

"I had all this stuff on me. I got it today from the cache to take back to the Bishop to return. I couldn't let 'em find me with this. It meant penal servitude. I had to make a getaway.

Eddy slipped the jewelry back into his pocket. He explained:

"It wouldn't do to have them find it here. It would bring you into it."

Fifi was all aflutter.

"Tell me all about it again," she demanded. "Slowly now, a woman's intuition sometimes helps to figure out these things."

And Eddy rehearsed the story again.

"I was backing toward the window. The shot was fired from behind me," he recalled.

While Eddy and Fifi were tensely considering the catastrophe which had befallen them, scarcely able, stunned as they were by its suddenness that all their deliciously planned future was at stake, the Mocking Bird regained his haunt at the Mission. He opened his secret panel and closed it after him. He drew out his automatic pistol and cleaned it, so that it would show no trace of having recently been fired. He drew a fresh cartridge from a box in the drawer and reloaded the pistol in a business-like manner.

Fifi was puzzled.

"Tell me again," she demanded, "how it was you had all this stuff with you."

"I was going to take these things to the Bishop, when the bell rang, and a voice said, 'Open in the name of the King.' You remember the Bishop had me promise this morning that I'd try to right the wrongs I'd done and bring back the things I'd taken and I told him I'd turn them over to him and he promised to see that they got back to their owners."

Eddy was intelligent enough to feel even in his desperate predicament the irony of the detective's visit at the inopportune hour he was planning to atone for his thefts. But Fifi didn't catch the point. She brightened, though, at the mention of the Bishop's name. All at once, she cried:

"Ze Bishop, zat so nice man! He say if we need frien', day or night—"

Her voice died down, but Eddy clutched at the straw of hope. The Bishop knew he had reformed, knew he meant well, would sympathize with his dreadful plight, would feel perhaps in duty bound to hide him and aid his escape and save his and Fifi's happiness.

"That's it," he assented, his face clearing and setting with resolution. "We'll go to him. See if he can help us."

London was still covered with the fog when West End Eddy set out for Limehouse, to seek the Bishop's assistance, little realizing that the Bishop was his deadly enemy and the author of his terrible peril. Fifi went with him, but the Bishop dismissed her with the specious plea that her presence meant additional danger for Eddy. But he did not fail to direct her to return the following afternoon.

All apparent sympathy, the Bishop took Eddy to his own rooms in the rear of the mission and set out on the ostensible mission of seeing whether he could not get Eddy aboard one of the boats at the East India docks so nearby. While he was gone, Eddy paced the room nervously. The anxiety had sapped all his poise. No longer was he the suave, shrewd man of the world, who lived by his wits. Now he was a pitiful hunted thing, a prey to fears and dreads.

He leaped up when the Bishop returned. "Have you arranged it?" he demanded plaintively.

The Bishop shook his head. "I can't get you on a boat, not tonight," he said. "Scotland Yard is combing Limehouse."

He put a kindly look into his eyes, as though his heart was heavy with sadness and the sad look of false sympathy added to Eddy's despair and apprehension. The Bishop sank his head in thought for some other solution. Eddy looked at him with a piteous eagerness and at last the Bishop said:

"I have a room, a secret room, one I've always kept in case my brother——"

The Bishop failed to finish the sentence, but Eddy understood that he meant he kept it in case the police closed too sharply on the Mocking Bird. The Bishop pointed to the clothes closet with the secret panel and Eddy entered it and the Bishop escorted him through and into the secret room. The secret room, dark with its one small window made Eddy shudder. It was like a catacomb, narrow. It had no apparent door. It looked like a cell, or a tomb. The Bishop busied himself with the lamp, and spoke to reassure Eddy, who plainly felt uncomfortable in his strange new surroundings.

"You will be safe here," he told the fugitive.

RENEE ADOREE AS "FIFI."

"Not even my brother knows about this place. I kept it for an extremity."

Everything in order, the Bishop turned to go out. He approached the panel and put his fingers on the secret spring. Then he paused and appeared to think for a moment. He pretended to hesitate to speak the thought which he let Eddy believe had occurred to him. With an apologetic manner, he planted the fiendish barb which he had been cruelly planning for a moment such as this:

"I hate to ask you this, but can you trust the little French girl?"

He bowed in a deprecating manner as if the question had been distasteful to him, and only his concern for Eddy's safety made it necessary.

Eddy acted as if he could scarcely believe his own ears as the Bishop's words fell on them. He was at first puzzled and then worried. The feeling of happy security he had felt in the morning had been dissipated by the dreadful events of the evening, and Eddy was no longer a care free happy lover. Now he was once more one of the hunted of the underworld and underworld habits of thought, underworld doubts, underworld fear of treachery, particularly treachery at the hands of women rose to haunt him. In his desperate flight, the Bishop's words planted the first seeds of a new and terrible doubt. As the poisonous, treacherous words sank in and

their effect showed on Eddy's face, the Mocking Bird, still in Eddy's mind the good kindly Bishop, the one on whom he depended to save him from a shameful death in the noose on the gallows tree, drew forward a little and planted another poison thought. Hesitatingly he observed:

"You know she's the only one who know's you're here and she's been quite a bit with my brother lately."

At one swoop, Eddy's mind was tortured by the thought that Fifi had been deceiving him and dread that his fate was in her power. With the air of one who has done a disagreeable duty, the Bishop passed through the panel and left Eddy imprisoned in the secret room of the single window,

CHAPTER X

TORTURED SOULS

Although she was crushed by the sudden terrible fate which had befallen her, although she was tormented almost beyond endurance by dread of the danger which hovered over Eddy, Fifi stuck to her work in the Blue Moon Music Hall. In this she was true to the code which runs through the mimic world of entertainment which makes the clown of the circus and the prima donna of the opera keep faith with their public, even when the bodies of their loved ones are cold in death. If it had not been for that little something to do she would have gone crazy. In the few moments that the Bishop permitted her to see Eddy she hardly knew him. Unshaved, worried, his clothes wrinkled from his flight through the rain, his nerves on edge with anxiety, his eyes hollow, his cheeks sunken, his debonair manner gone, his assurance vanished, the jealous poison planted by the Bishop already fermenting in his troubled heart, it would have been better if Fifi had not seen him at all. The sight of him tortured the maternal tenderness which love for him had awakened in her heart, young and unspoiled in spite of her concert hall experience and his queer manner stabbed her like a cruel dagger.

With spider like cunning, the Bishop pretended more than ever to be her friend, and wormed out of her the secrets of her heart. He studied her like a heartless vivisectionist studies a bird impaled on a sharp spike. He gathered a knowledge of her mind and its reactions so that he might carry out his treacherous, wicked plot to possess her as he had possessed Polly. He taught her to lean on him, and never failed to let drop little splashes of venom against Eddy in such a way that she did not suspect him. Even though he professed to comfort her, Fifi never left the Bishop without suffering greater agonies of mind than before.

The girl's pitiful suffering gained however the sincere sympathy of Limehouse Polly. She knew how the heart of a woman in love is tortured by danger threatening her loved one. Her own love for the Mocking Bird had taught her how bitter it is for a woman to love a man of the underworld and to suffer agonies of mind and heart when the power of Society and the menace of the Law threatens him. She knew from her own experience that a woman like Fifi probably loved Eddy all the more for his mistake, just as a mother sometimes loves a wayward wanton child better than a docile and complacent one that the world calls good, because the bad child needs more love.

Limehouse Polly had watched with a kindly

eye the flowering of the romance between Fifi and Eddy. She had feared for the lovers because of the interest of the Mocking Bird in the girl and she had not mistaken the Mocking Bird's look of malignant hate which boded harm for them. In Fifi's happiness, Polly saw what might have been hers, if the Mocking Bird had only kept the promises, with which he won her in the days when she herself had first come to the Blue Moon.

Although she still loved the Mocking Bird, loved in spite of the way he had betrayed her, in spite of the way he had deserted her and shamed her, even though she still hoped to rouse the spark of good that she still saw in him, and cherished the wish and the belief that he would realize his better self and come back to her, Polly was not jealous of the Mocking Bird's interest in Fifi. She proved it on the night of the slumming party when she took the Mocking Bird's bouquet and his invitation to a table in the auditorium with him to the girl back stage. But she knew enough about the Mocking Bird when he was in the grip of his primeval emotions to realize that his present interest in Fifi was a threat to the girl's immortal soul. She saw the look of predatory animal come into his eyes when he looked at her, and now that trouble had befallen her, now that her natural protector, Eddy, was in hiding, was in his power as the Bishop, the Mocking

Bird's looks were enough to make any onlooker shudder.

Whenever Fifi visited the Mission it was the Mocking Bird's method to greet her as the good Bishop, worm confidences out of her in her troubled excitement, plant disturbing thoughts in her mind and then when she had left, hurry to his rooms in the rear of the Mission, throw his limbs back into position and hurry to the Music Hall after her. He took pains to worm his way into her company at every opportunity, and she was too distracted to repel him. Time after time he dragged the half-crazed, half-dazed girl to his table and forced her to drink. In the lower depths of life, drink is the ready instrument with which the poor fight trouble and Fifi was easily persuaded by the Mocking Bird to drink more than was good for her. As she drank, he looked more and more the spider, and she more and more the victim.

Watching them, Limehouse Polly shuddered. She knew that if the Mocking Bird had his way, the revulsion of feeling which Fifi would feel when his possessive mood passed and he threw her aside, would drive her to the degradation of the gutter or to death in the chill soiled waters of the river. For Polly was sure that Fifi was clean and good at heart and could not face the fate the Mocking Bird planned for her.

Polly could not bear seeing Fifi and the Mock-

ing Bird together without giving the girl a word of warning. She broke a rule which had been sacred to her, never to interfere with any of the wishes of the Mocking Bird. She pocketed the pride which had always kept her from showing that the Mocking Bird's attentions to another woman had ever caused her concern. She went to Fifi in her dressing room and begged her not to accept any more invitations to the Mocking Bird's table. She warned her not to allow the Mocking Bird to escort her from the Music Hall to the Mission and to her lodgings. As she changed from her stage costume to her street clothes, Fifi explained to her:

"Eef I go wiz zat Mocking Bird, I haff reason. You mus' not be jealous."

In vain Polly sought to impress on her that she must be foolish to believe that the Mocking Bird, a rival for Eddy's place in her affections, could possibly be of a sincere assistance in getting Eddy out of his perilous situation. But Fifi only sought again to convince Polly that she had no idea of considering the Mocking Bird as a suitor. In a burst of confidence, Fifi exclaimed:

"It ess my last night here, cherie, zat Mocking Bird will see me no more."

Before Fifi finished dressing, the Mocking Bird entered the music hall. He went to a table near the door from the dressing room through which Fifi must emerge and took a place there.

His eyes were riveted on the door. His brow was furrowed with tense thought. He pressed his lips tightly together. From time to time his tongue crept out and moistened them. His eyes smoldered with harshly suppressed fire. The very fury of his desires tortured him. He was like a tired horse ridden by a cruel driver, his passion brutal. As his heart beat and his lungs labored, forcing his nostrils wide open on his tense face, a sickening doubt came into his mind and he asked himself why it was when he had his body gnarled and he held himself in check to play the part of the Bishop he felt calm and at ease, and why when he was in the full possession of his faculties and free as Satan in his thoughts, he suffered the tortures of the damned.

While the Mocking Bird was waiting for Fifi to emerge from the dressing rooms into the bar adjoining the auditorium, Red, the burly thug who had assisted The Ghost in the slumming party hold-up came into the bar. He looked about for his chief and spotted him at the door. He walked quickly and quietly to the Mocking Bird's table and slid a chair alongside the gang leader. Slipping a thick, freckled hairy hand to his mouth he whispered behind it:

"Scotland Yard picked up The Ghost tonight."

As usual when receiving news of any kind, no matter how disquieting from his accomplices and confederates, no change in his expression denoted

that the information excited any emotion. He listened quietly as if he scarcely heard the words as Red told him the circumstances of The Ghost's arrest, but he didn't miss a detail. Inwardly the news was alarming. The Ghost was a useful fellow, but his dependence on the drug made him unreliable and the Mocking Bird had reason to fear that deprived of it, he might weaken and betray his pals.

Ordinarily, on getting news like this, the Mocking Bird would have taken steps to protect himself, but the strength of his desire to see Fifi, the burning urge to play out the game for the one prize in life that seemed worth while made him gamble with fate and remain at the door huddled and intent like a starved cat at a mouse-hole.

CHAPTER XI

DRAWING THE NOOSE

The door of the dressing room opened into the bar, and Fifi in her street clothes started down the long room toward the street. With one powerful hand the Mocking Bird pulled her into a chair, and too weak to resist she fell into it beside him. Limehouse Polly looking after her felt her heart sink, but a glare from the Mocking Bird made her close the door.

Without waiting to ask Fifi if she wanted a drink, the Mocking Bird summoned a waiter and commanded him to take her order. She ordered beer, but curtly the Mocking Bird cancelled it and told the waiter to bring her strong port wine. She did not contradict him. When she drained the drink, the Mocking Bird's manner changed. As adept in playing parts as any actor, he appeared to be in a much chastened mood. He played the part of a man who was sad and introspective. He lowered his head without a word to her and then looked up.

False tears were in his eyes as he faced the simple troubled French girl. Knowing that she was in trouble, having learned when he talked to her as the false Bishop how sad her own heart was, he had decided to appeal to her sympathy as one who like herself had a sorrow. He was

shrewd enough to believe the adage that "pity is akin to love" and he wanted to lay the foundation for having her turn to him when his deep laid schemes had caused a rift betwen her and Eddy. Looking at her as if his heart would break and making a great pretense at self-control, his lips trembled convulsively. He made a convincing appearance of trying to speak and of being stopped by emotion too great for expression. Fifi's heart was plainly touched. Her womanly sympathy came to the surface. She forgot her own troubles and sorrows in genuine concern for the Mocking Bird. She was utterly deceived by his consummate acting. She was bewildered by seeing the Mocking Bird whom she had known always as a rough self-controlled creature, dominating himself as well as others, in the grip of tears. In surprise as well as sympathy, she questioned:

"Monsieur, monsieur, what is it?"

Apparently fighting to control his quivering lips, the Mocking Bird gulped and replied:

"I—I see you going over to my brother's Mission. Why can't he let me alone."

Fifi felt genuinely sorry for him and reacted to his ruse precisely as he had intended. But she was puzzled by his complaint against the Bishop, and as the Mocking Bird expected it led her into asking interested questions which paved the way for the next idea he wished to implant in her

simple mind and heart. He made a charge which of course, since he was Bishop as well as Mocking Bird, he knew to be untrue:

"He's trying to turn you against me, you, the only clean thing that ever came into my life!"

And as he spoke the words with every impression of sincerity, as though the very thought of it was more than he could bear, he left in Fifi's heart the touching thought that this man devotedly loved her with a high romantic love. And here again, the Mocking Bird proved himself a practical psychologist where women were concerned, for nothing charms them more, or touches them more deeply, than to be told that they are loved by those who confess that their love is hopeless, that they are loved by those who feel themselves unworthy. The confession of unworthines is a subtle compliment that never fails to affect the feminine heart. Else why do so many good women love black sheep and marry them to reform them? And as he blurted out the words, the Mocking Bird added another artistic touch to his performance for Fifi's benefit. He got up as though he had said more than he intended to say, as though he couldn't continue to exhibit his weakness to her, as though he were ashamed of his outburst and stumbled away along the bar, out into the night. Fifi looked after him with genuine sorrow.

But once the door of the Blue Moon Music

Hall was behind him, a low fiendish chuckle rolled out of his throat. He hurried along the street to the Mission, chortling diabolically as he rehearsed the next step in his plot to demolish the happiness of Fifi and Eddy. He laughed inwardly with admiration at his own devilish cunning as he went over step by step the scene by which he hoped to replace the love they felt for each other by a fierce and mistaken hate.

Engrossed in his scheme, the Mocking Bird had entirely forgotten Red's information that The Ghost was in the clutches of the law. And if for the moment a fleeting thought of it crowded in upon his mind, he dismissed it for the pleasure of contemplating the pleasant picture of Eddy and Fifi at dagger's points and the girl falling into his arms.

But while the Mocking Bird hurried back to the Safe Harbour Mission to distort his body into the form of the crippled Bishop whom he impersonated as a cloak for his crimes, the high command of Scotland Yard was preparing a third degree for The Ghost. That drug addict member of the Mocking Bird's band was already shaky from several hours without a sniff of his customary cocaine. His nerves were on edge. He smoked one cigarette after another. He was worried because he had no clear idea of the charge against him, or of how much the police knew of his recent activities. He was angry with his pals

for not smuggling drugs to him in his detention cell. He was inclined to think he had been deserted. A weakling at best, a poor jackal among the panthers of the Mocking Bird's band, he knew he would go stark mad if he should draw a prison term during which the drug on which he depended should be denied him. He had had one short session of deprivation and he dreaded the punishments of Hell and the Hereafter much less than imprisonment without cocaine. In that short session he knew that Death held no terrors compared to lack of the drug on which his life depended.

As he waited in his cell and cursed his confederates for not calling on him with comforts in which cocaine could be concealed, the summons came to lead him before the inspector assigned to question him. Shaking and sullen he entered the room where the inspector at a desk was waiting with detectives and a stenographer. Coward that he was, he feared bodily violence. But more than the beating that he dreaded at the hands of the detectives, he dreaded the revenge of the Mocking Bird and Red and his other companions in crime. So for a time, he maintained in spite of his twitching, shaking drug starved body, a stubborn sullen defiance to the inspector's questions. He gained confidence as he thought he saw them baffled. Then all at once, a hideous thing happened. The inspector's hand flashed from behind

his back and held up the empty frame of Miss Higginbotham's diamond dog collar. For the moment, his hollow eyes were fixed on it as if he had been hypnotised. Then they fell and his hand went up before his face. The inspector's face was stern. He barked briskly:

"Come clean, my lad; the lady picked your photograph out of a big pile of drug addicts in the Rogues Gallery. You can get yourself off more easily if you tell the truth. You were only the cat's paw in this job. YOU didn't have the brains to plan it. At most you got a couple of packs of coke. But you're one of the boys that did it, and robbery with firm arms rates penal servitude. Come clean!"

The Ghost was paralyzed with terror. His mouth was dry and his tongue stuck to his teeth. The empty jaws of the diamond sockets of the plundered diamond dog collar grinned at him like death's heads.

"Give him a drink of water," commanded the inspector.

Greedily and gratefully The Ghost drank it. One of the detectives handed him a cigarette and lighted it.

"We'll protect you, my lad," the detective assured him, while the Inspector nodded. "You needn't be afraid of your pals."

The Ghost resumed a little ease of manner

again. But the inspector roused him jerkily with a sharp:

"What were you doing with a pistol in your hand? Who put you up to a desperate deed like that?"

The Ghost cracked under the sudden question, which took him off his guard.

"The Mockin' Bird made me do ut!"

With a few quick puffs, he ate the cigarette away. He begged cravenly for another. But the detective was stern again.

"Not 'til you come clean with the whole story, my boy; then all the fags you want," he said.

One of the detectives pushed a chair forward and The Ghost slumped into it. The stenographer poised his pencil expectantly.

Meanwhile in his rooms behind the Mission the Mocking Bird twisted his body into the form he took as the Bishop and waited ghoulishly for Fifi to arrive.

CHAPTER XII

AN ALARMING APPARITION

In the narrow dimly lighted cell like room where the Mocking Bird, posing as the Bishop and his friend, kept him imprisoned West End Eddy also was counting the minutes to Fifi's arrival. Eddy paced up an down the room, for the hour was approaching when the Bishop had announced that it would be safe to make a dash for the docks. Anxiously he looked at his watch and wondered why Fifi was delayed. As his back was turned toward him, the Mocking Bird in his Bishop's disguise leered at him slyly. But when Eddy faced him, his Bishop's face was bland and sweet. At odd moments the Bishop spoke in a philosophical manner of women of the stage in general.

"Don't take it too hard, my lad," he counselled, "if she leaves you in the lurch. They're not to blame if they're spoiled, the pretty darlings. The men are to blame for spoiling them. They makes 'em used to pretty things and they don't stand up under hard knocks."

But Eddy tried to shut his ears to the stream of subtle philosophical poison. Unknown to him, Fifi was hurrying to the mission, with her travelling bag, determined to persuade Eddy to fly at once and let her fly with him. She had taken means to ascertain that Detective Grey was well

on the way to recovery and that the Scotland Yard hunt for Eddy had appreciably relaxed. She was eager to give him the news and to be with him again, anywhere, sharing his perils if need be, for the chance of happiness. But it was no part of the Mocking Bird's design that the lovers should have any proper opportunity for an interview. As Fifi entered the Mission, she hurried to the rear stairs leading to the living quarters and rapped on the door. In the further room, where he was with Eddy, the Bishop heard the rap. He slipped through the secret panel, which he alone knew how to open, through the clothes closet, into the room which he occupied as Bishop and then to the door leading to the Mission proper. He slid the door open and faced Fifi. With cunning dexterity he took her travelling bag from her hand. Placing it on a chair, he assumed an air of deep concern. He shook his head sorrowfully. He looked at her several times with a sad look in his eyes. At last Fifi's curiosity made her speak.

"Monsieur, what is it?" she demanded.

The false Bishop put his finger to his lips and then leaned over toward her and whispered a monstrous lie:

"He leaves at three, BUT he told me to tell you that he couldn't get away tonight."

He shook his head as though he could not understand why West End Eddy should want

to act that way. Fifi stared at him incredulously. She had not been prepared for the false information that West End Eddy intended to desert her. It never occurred to her that the false Bishop, whom she knew as such a good kind man, could be guilty of a malicious lie. The poison which the Mocking Bird in his part as Bishop had already injected into her simple heart made it easy for her to believe the terrible falsehood. Her eyes flashed with anger and resentment. She started to go through the clothes closet to the secret panel into the rear room and there confront her false lover.

As she came through the panel, Eddy was toying with the blade of a wicked looking clasp knife, jabbing it into the wall, in a fit of cold, ugly despair and hate. As the panel closed behind her, shutting her and Eddy into the little room, from which neither knew how to open the panel to escape, the Bishop tiptoed to the panel and placed his ear against it, listening with an unholy gleam of anticipation in his eyes to the words of misunderstanding for which he had plotted by the false information he had given to both of them.

Eddy looked at Fifi coldly. He was wondering to what extent she had double crossed him. He was sure that the police had not come into Limehouse, as the Bishop had told him they had, without some information. He told her:

"I can't get away tonight. The cops are watching."

The words seemed to Fifi's simple mind to confirm what the Bishop had told her of Eddy's supposed scheme to desert her. She couldn't keep the acid doubt out of her words as she snapped at him:

"Is zat so?"

They stood staring at each other. He jabbed viciously at the wall with the blade of his long clasp knife. She stared at him with disgust in her glance, and contempt on her lip.

The scene was going too slowly to suit the evil listener at the other side of the panel. He tip-toed away from the panel, and went to the door leading to the mission. He opened it softly and then slammed it viciouly as though someone had entered abruptly. The sound was plainly audible to Eddy and Fifi and made them startle for a moment.

Then he stepped back to the center of the outer room and putting a cringing, frightened tone into his Bishop's voice he repeated the name of his Mocking Bird self:

"Dan! Dan!"

Eddy's lips framed the words, under his breath:

"The Mocking Bird!"

Both Eddy and Fifi stared at the panel. Eddy was more startled at the first, for he had been

told that the cell-like room he occupied was the Mocking Bird's refuge and he knew the Mocking Bird to be his rival in love and a deadly enemy. Fifi too was startled, for she knew from Polly's warning and his own pleas that the Mocking Bird had fixed his possessive eyes upon her.

Then as Eddy and Fifi pricked up their ears, the Mocking Bird spoke in his own voice, with great apparent ferocity:

"You hypocritical psalm singer, trying to keep me from the only girl I ever loved——"

The words recalled to Fifi the Mocking Bird's clever ruse of scarcely an hour before. She remembered then how he had cried for her and professed a romantic affection. She could not conceal the anxiety in her eyes at the further sounds coming from behind the panel.

The Mocking Bird, consummate actor that he was, took advantage of their inability to see him to stage a fake fight between his two selves, Bishop and Mocking Bird. He scuffled his feet on the floor. He shoved a table. He overturned a chair with fierce force.

Beyond the panel, Eddy clenched his fists, but he was helpless. Dread shadowed his face over the outcome of the fake fight, for if the Mocking Bird should win, he feared for his own personal safety. Both Eddy and Fifi were so excited that they could hear their own breathing as they tried to catch every detail of what was happening in

the outer room. The curses of the Mocking Bird mingled with the pleas of the Bishop for mercy. Finally the Bishop picked up a chair and threw it heavily on the floor. As it fell he threw his arms and legs back into normal position, ripped off the clerical garb of the Bishop and swiftly threw on the customary clothing of the Mocking Bird. But he still kept using the Bishop's voice, this time weaker than before, to plant in Eddy's mind the belief that Fifi had betrayed him. Speaking ostensibly to his wicked brother, Fifi and Eddy heard the Bishop's voice give utterance to a vicious lie:

"Dan! Dan!" the Bishop's voice pleaded. "Have nothing to do with her. She'll turn you over to the cops."

The voice became muffled as if the Mocking Bird had tried to throttle the Bishop for slandering his sweetheart.

A terrible look of disgust, of hate, of despair, came into Eddy's eyes at the unfinished sentence which indicated that Fifi was an informer. Fifi looked puzzled. She couldn't understand why her good friend the Bishop should malign her. She looked at Eddy. She wanted to put her hand on his arm and tell him that it wasn't true. But Eddy had no ears, no eyes for her. He was flattened against the panel in his eagerness to hear more.

CHAPTER XIII

A FIENDISH FALSEHOOD

The abrupt end of the Bishop's declaration that Fifi would turn him over to the police, was followed by the Mocking Bird's snarling response:

"You can't talk that way about her. She's the only good woman I ever loved."

Eddy's lip curled in scorn. He knew the remark was cant. He knew that the Mocking Bird was not interested in the goodness of women. He took it only as a further evidence of how deeply the Mocking Bird's feelings were committed to Fifi and he cursed his being shut up in that cell-like room, he cursed his lack of a revolver. He looked with disgust at the clasp knife, which he feared would fail him in a conflict with his rival. But Fifi's eyes shone. If the Bishop had unaccountably formed a bad opinion of her, her good name had a defender in the Mocking Bird. She thought the Mocking Bird couldn't be so bad after all. It was good to feel, she reflected, that she had at least one friend in the world, now that she believed that West End Eddy wanted to desert her. She couldn't measure the contempt she felt for Eddy, so cowardly in the concern for his own safety that at the first breath of danger, he forgot all his vows of enduring love. But neither she nor Eddy was shrewd

enough to imagine that the scene beyond their sight had been planned solely for their benefit. They were two foolish gulls taking everything they heard as if it were the Gospel truth.

The next word that Eddy and Fifi heard were in the unctuous tones of the Bishop, speaking as if he were struggling for his breath, the Mocking Bird's hands on his throat, choking him.

"Dan! Dan!" the Bishop's voice pleaded, in an apparent struggle. "Look out for yourself. I only mean your good. SHE'LL TIP THE COPS OFF, DAN, LIKE SHE'S DONE WITH WEST END EDDY!"

And as he finished that sinister speech the Mocking Bird crept closely to the panel to feast his ears on the quarrel between Eddy and Fifi that he planned would follow that fiendish falsehood.

Eddy turned slowly from the panel, his heart sick within him at those words. Everything came back to him—everything seemed proof of what he had just heard. He connected it with the Bishop's warnings to him, he connected it with the Bishop's stories that while he was in hiding Fifi had accepted the attentions of the Mocking Bird, he connected it with the fewness of her visits, from which she had been discouraged by the Bishop without Eddy's knowledge on the pretext that it might lead the police to his retreat.

With a look of murder in his eyes, Eddy

turned to Fifi, his hand on the knife. A look of terror came over Fifi. She was paralyzed with terror. A wild scream of fear burst from her lips. She slid away from him and faced him with wide open eyes, her back to the wall.

His lips tightly pressed together, so that they were white and bloodless, Eddy approached her with an oath:

"You——!" he cried. He crept nearer and nearer, the knife in his hands. Fifi shrank closer to the wall, her eyes fixed on him with the helpless dread of a bird charmed by a predatory snake. Eddy came nearer and nearer, snapping out sullen abuse which drew a wicked gleam of pleasure to the Mocking Bird, cramped in the clothes closet listening. As his hot breath beat on her trembling face, she began to whimper in an agony of fear. Her whine made the Mocking Bird gloat and chuckle. Fifi put her hand across her face to shut out the sight of Eddy as he sidled closer and closer. Then something made her look up suddenly. She saw the knife poised in his hand, and thought he was about to drive it into her bosom. But filled with hate as he was, the sight of her pitiful fright was too much for Eddy. Just as she voiced a new shriek of terror, Eddy tossed the knife away. Even though she had betrayed him, she was very dear to him. She was weak. She was a woman. He could not harm her. As her scream died out, the panel slid

back and the Mocking Bird leaped into the room. His hand was in his right hand coat pocket as if he held a revolver there, and he pointed his concealed outstretched finger like a pistol barrel at Eddy.

"Cut that out, you!" he barked at Eddy, while with his powerful left arm, he dragged the half-hypnotised Fifi into the clothes closet and propelled her into the outer room.

Eddy glared at him with the fury of a maniac, and wrung his bare hands in despair. As his glance sought the discarded clasp knife on the floor. But the Mocking Bird, keeping him covered with the imaginary pistol, backed out of the room, snapped the panel shut and left Eddy imprisoned and in despair.

In those few moments, all of Eddy's hopes had crashed about his ears. His faith in Fifi had been destroyed. Something terrible had happened to the Bishop, the only friend he had in the world. His hiding place had become known to his worst enemy, the Mocking Bird. For all he knew, Detective Grey might be dead. At any moment now he might expect the arrival of the police to lead him off to prison and start him on the road to the hangman's noose. And just out of sight, Fifi, who had inspired him to the highest and noblest resolutions in his life, was probably being soiled by the caresses of a criminal rival

for whom even as a crook in the days when he himself was a crook, he felt a cynical contempt.

Eddy's shoulders slumped and he sank into a chair. He was too weak, too crushed to care what happened to him now. Let the police come and end the agony of anxiety which tortured him, he prayed.

In one final gesture of despair, Eddy rose and hurled himself against the secret panel. But it failed to yield for the fraction of an inch. A new fear came to torture him. He might die in that hole of hunger and thirst before anyone found him. The high narrow window was too small for him to squeeze his body through and so far as he could see it opened on blank walls so that there was no way he could attract attention.

Meanwhile in the outer room, the Mocking Bird was busy trying his blandishments on Fifi. His scene with Eddy over, he dropped his attitude of fierceness and was ostentatiously quiet and gentle. He quietly pushed out a chair for Fifi to sit upon. She obeyed him dumbly. There was a look of dazed, stupid gratitude on her face at his attentions.

Her world had crashed about her in ruins. Eddy's love, which she had come to look upon as the rock of Gibraltar, had failed her at the first emergency. Without even giving her an opportunity to answer and explain, he had taken as true an outrageous lie against her. The Mock-

ing Bird, who didn't know her half as well, had been her staunch defender, even when her maligner had been his own brother. He had saved her life. She blushed. She looked up at him and stammered out her thanks. The Mocking Bird trembled a little at the success of his deeply plotted stratagem. He slipped to her side, slipped an arm around her waist and bowed his head while Fifi stroked it. There was a greedy twinkle in his eyes. His lips burned to smother her with kisses, but he decided to take his time rather than frighten her by a too sudden exhibition of his passion.

CHAPTER XIV

THE UNDERWORLD WIRELESS

As Polly came from her dressing room back stage in the Blue Moon Music Hall and passed along the bar on her way to the street, half a dozen men rose to invite her to sit at their tables to drink. She repulsed each of them with a weary gesture. She wanted to be alone and think. She hoped she had succeeded in saving young and pretty Fifi from the clutches of the Mocking Bird. She hoped that already Fifi and West End Eddy were on their way out of England to safety. She felt sure that love had awakened what latent goodness there was in Eddy and that Fifi and Eddy would be happy together, saved by the power of their mutual love. She hugged another hope to her bosom, and that was that some day, sooner or later, the goodness which she alone saw in the wicked Mocking Bird would come to the surface, and true to his better nature, he would return to her and they would end their days in decency and safety together. She sought her cheaply furnished room and slowly removed her hat. She was just putting her vanity bag in the bureau drawer, when there came a knock on her door. She startled, with a little alarm, to have a vistor at that hour, and slipping the chain bolt into place, she opened the door warily and

peered out. By the flickering light of the gas jet she made out the face of Red Allen, one of the Mocking Bird's gang and the fellow who at the Mocking Bird's order had assisted The Ghost in robbing Miss Patterson of her diamond dog collar on the night West End Eddy had come to the Blue Moon at the head of a slumming party and had seen Fifi for the first time.

Red was pale and anxious.

"I got to talk to you, private," he said. Polly slipped the chain out of the fastening and he darted tip-toe into the room, Polly closed the door and Red asked her:

"Have you seen the Mocking Bird?"

Polly shook her head. Red appeared more worried than ever.

"I've been looking all over for him," he said.

Polly's love for the Mocking Bird showed in her anxious look.

"What's the matter?" she demanded.

Red frowned.

"Matter enough," he responded. "The Ghost has squealed. He's told everything he knows. Scotland Yard is looking for the Mocking Bird. The Ghost's told 'em that it was the Mocking Bird that shot the detective from behind West End Eddy's back."

Polly clutched the back of a chair to steady herself. By rights she should have hated the Mocking Bird for betraying her, long years ago,

for beating her when his mood impelled him, for deserting her and humiliating her, for seeking to use her to further his fell designs on Fifi, for his brutal plot against the clean romance of Eddy and Fifi, but the thought that the Mocking Bird was in danger roused in her a passion to protect him, to save him.

She pulled her coat from the hook and donned it. She hastily pulled on her hat. She reached in the drawer and grabbed her bag.

"I'll try to find him," she said suddenly. And she started for the door. Red stopped her a moment.

"Can I hide here?" he asked. She did not wait to reply, but she left the door open behind her. Red took one glance after her and then closed the door, shutting himself in Polly's room.

In the outer room behind the Mission, the Mocking Bird was busy making toast and tea. He brought them to Fifi and urged her to eat and drink. As she nibbled the freshly buttered toast and drank the steaming tea, Fifi's eyes began to lose their look of fright and terror. She became more calm. Through all his bustling activity of attention to her, the Mocking Bird kept up a chatter of excuses. He made himself out a misjudged and persecuted fellow, who had been maligned by everyone. At heart he sought to convince Fifi his impulses were good but Limehouse had never given him a chance. Because

he was full of life, he had been pronounced incorrigible at school, and everything there and afterward in Limehouse had been blamed on him. He had suffered, too, he declared, because of his brother's reputation for goodness. Now he appealed to Fifi's sympathy.

"Can't you see now, how they've all lied about me, most of all that hypocrite brother of mine?"

And Fifi's serious face showed that she swallowed every word of it. Not for a moment did Fifi ever imagine that the Mocking Bird and his "hypocrite brother" were one and the same person. She had no inkling that the Mocking Bird had invented and impersonated his "brother" the "Bishop" as a cloak and cover for his crimes as well as a means of expressing in action those impulses to do good which seemed to him inconsistent as the hard-boiled leader of a gang of Limehouse thieves and thugs. He often cursed himself for having those impulses to be kind. He considered them signs of weakness and yet he had an uncontrollable desire to do them. He got a pleasure from his good deeds as "Bishop," but as the Mocking Bird he regarded them really as the vices of a milk-sop and hypocrite.

Shrewdly by waving a finger at the half open door of an adjoining bedroom, the Mocking Bird gave Fifi the impression that the hypocrite brother, the Bishop, was only just out of sight.

OWEN MOORE AS "WEST END ALGERNON."

"You see, don't you?" he insisted, forcing her to speak.

And in her dazed trance, Fifi nodded "yes." Despite the Mocking Bird's kindness, strange events had happened so quickly that Fifi was still in half a trance, not quite sure where she was. But Eddy in the cell-like room beyond was sunk in a terrible state of depression, his head in his hands, waiting for some new blow to fall and crush him utterly. The Mocking Bird grinned widely. He was sure that he was making progress with Fifi and soon it would be safe for him to make violent love to her.

The performances in the music halls were over for the night. The slummers and the curiosity seekers had left Limehouse. Drunken sailors were singing on their way back to the ships. The shutters were being swung into position before the doors of public houses. Outside the doors of opium dens and cheap gambling dives, the lookouts leaned wearily against lamp posts watching for inquisitive strangers who might be men from Scotland Yard. The beggars and pan-handlers who had whined against the sailors and the prostitutes, the slummers and the sensation-seeking visitors, began to filter into the Safe Harbour Mission, and warm themselves about its great stove. There was a hum of drowsy conversation as they started to dispose of themselves for the night in the chairs which served them for beds.

One of the regulars started turning down the gas lights until they showed tongues of blue flame.

Into the dim room, brushing against the drowsy men came Limehouse Polly, bumping into some of those who were still hunting a more comfortable corner, stumbling over the extended legs of those who were already asleep. Perfectly familiar with the place, Polly had no difficulty in reaching the door at the head of the stairs leading to the Bishop's quarters in the rear. She rapped repeatedly and insistently on the door. Fifi, who had slumped down under the Mocking Bird's hypnotic conversation, sat up in a wondering sort of way and the Mocking Bird tiptoed to the door.

With womanly intuition, Polly sensed that there was someone close to the door listening to her knock, while uncertain about admitting her. She raised her voice:

"Bishop! Bishop!" she cried. "I must see you. It's Polly!"

The Mocking Bird twisted the catch on the door and opened it. Fifi was on her feet. The Mocking Bird flung the door far back, defiantly and Polly stepped quickly in. Her glance fell at once on Fifi. Polly's own face was a study. She had not expected to find the Mocking Bird so quickly, and she didn't quite know what to think of finding Fifi there with him at midnight. There was an agony of doubt in her expression.

She couldn't escape feeling that Fifi's assurances that she was through with the Mocking Bird, and would see him no more, given only a few hours before, were just lies, nothing but lies.

But with a start she remembered her errand, recollected that the Mocking Bird was in danger, and she turned to him with an appealing gesture. The Mocking Bird grinned maliciously, as looking beyond him, he saw her eyes catch sight of the big bed in the room beyond and with a wicked sideways glance, he hinted that he and Fifi were already on terms of familiarity.

CHAPTER XV

BAD NEWS

Polly's knees sagged under her as she got the full force of that evil leer in the direction of the sleeping room beyond. She felt convinced she had come too late to prevent the Mock Bird from wreaking his evil will on Fifi. The Mocking Bird rose quickly and shut the bedroom door. He had hinted to Fifi that the Bishop was in that room and he did not wish his information investigated. At this late hour, he didn't want to conjure up any doubts about the reality of the Bishop's existence. His invention of that character had been too useful to him in escaping the consequences of his misdeeds and was necessary if he was to find an outlet for his strange desire to do a good deed now and then.

As the Mocking Bird turned, Polly put up her hand, once more under the control of her fierce desire to protect him from the danger of which as yet he knew nothing, a danger, which at that very moment might overwhelm him.

"Dan," she begged, "Dan, I want to see you —alone!"

But the Mocking Bird sneered at her tender devoted anxious expression. His lip curled scornfully. He dropped the ingratiating tones

with which he had been addressing himself to Fifi and snarled at Polly:

"Look here, Polly. Don't you be tryin' to make this little kid think there's anything you could see me alone about!"

By this time Fifi was completely deceived. Recalling what she had heard when she first came to the Blue Moon Music Hall, that Polly had been the Mocking Bird's girl and that he had discarded her, she thought that Polly was nothing but a jealous and dangerous woman. Her natural coquetry was aroused. The woman resented the Mocking Bird's interest in her and was trying to win him back. Fifi was all in the qui vive. Polly would see. Nobody had ever taken away a man from Fifi! The Mocking Bird grinned as he saw Fifi pull herself together. He saw that he had scored. In his philosophy, once a Limehouse lad had a woman thinking some other woman wanted him he could wind the first woman around his little finger. He chuckled audibly. Polly too, flared up, as the two of them looked at her, plainly as a ridiculous intruder on their tete-a-tete. But then she became deadly calm and whipped out the information which had brought her through the dark dangerous streets at midnight:

"I just wanted to tell you that The Ghost has squealed and that Scotland Yard is after you for the shooting."

If Polly had thrown a bomb she could not have given both Fifi and the Mocking Bird a greater surprise. They stood looking at her as if they had been turned suddenly to stone. Without waiting for their delayed comments, she walked to the door, opened it, stepped out, closing it behind her and hurried through the group of sleeping derelicts to the dark street.

Fifi's jaw dropped. Her mouth remained wide open. Her eyelids spread apart in horror. Her cheeks paled. Her heart stopped beating. She gazed at the Mocking Bird with a creepy dread. When she finally was able to force herself to speak, she stammered:

"You—you, you did the shooting!"

As she uttered the words she began to cry and tremble. She began to scream, but she was so weak with chill dread that the scream died on her lips and she sank into a chair exhausted. She tried to rise but she found she was paralyzed with fright. She suddenly realized that she hated this cold, hard scheming unnatural beast who was so close to her. She felt her flesh crawl and tiny goose pimples form on her body as she realized that she was alone with a potential murderer, more demon than man. She saw in a flash that the whole thing, her catastrophe, Eddy's flight and hiding, the cruel sudden interruption to her happiness with Eddy, yes, even her presence in

this queer uncanny place had been plotted with fiendish cunning.

The Mocking Bird was unprepared for the revulsion of her feelings. He forgot himself so far as to come over and try to put a hand on her. She shrank back from him as though he were a leper and revealed her loathing for him in an expression as vivid as physical nausea.

This infuriated him more than ever. He seized her arm in a powerful grip and shook her.

"It's a lie," he cried fiercely. "It's a lie."

Fifi gathered strength and tried to shake off his grip. His steely strong fingers sank into the soft flesh of her fore-arm, bruising it and he tried to force her to look at him, in the hope that he could hypnotise her into believing him.

But all she did was moan.

"Eddy!" she whimpered.

The mention of his rival's name made a maniac of the Mocking Bird. He flung down Fifi's arm furiously. He gnashed his teeth and glared at her so that she put a hand before her face to shut out his hideous visage.

Swift motor cars hurried groups of operatives from Scotland Yard to Limehouse. Up and down the narrow dark streets they went, breaking on dice games and thieves dens where the Mocking Bird and members of his gang might be found. Breathlessly in his hiding place in

Polly's room, Red Allen heard with choking breath and beating heart the call of "Open in the name of the King!" He was glad that he had seized the opportunity to seek an unsuspected refuge.

Keen eyed men barred all the boundaries of Limehouse while others combed the district, driving the human rats from their burrows like ferrets. It was a thorough job. Scotland Yard was aroused. The Mocking Bird had often slipped through its fingers, but there was to be no escape this time, since he had dared to attempt the killing of one of the Yard's own.

The hue and cry of the man hunt had reached the block on which the Safe Harbour Mission stood as Polly stepped into the street. She saw the unmistakable forms of two Scotland Yard men approaching the Mission. Terror for the man she loved overpowered every other sentiment in her heart. She darted quickly back into the Mission before they saw her and hurried again to the rear stairs.

She stood in the half darkness and bruised her knuckles pounding on the door. She trembled with excitement when no answer came. Again and again she pounded until the skin broke and the blood came. Polly was desperate. She shuddered that her warning might be too late. She knew that on this occasion not even the good reputation of his brother the Bishop would make

the Safe Harbour a secure sanctuary for the Mocking Bird but that the place would be searched from cellar to attic for him. She knew that his only safety was in a rapid flight. Another minute's delay and she might be too late.

Polly's loud knocking woke all the sleeping men in the main room of the Mission. They began to curse the noise that had awakened them. One of the derelicts sought to drag her from the door.

"It's a woman," he announced. "She must be drunk or crazy or something."

But Polly tore herself from his grasp and pounded on the door with renewed fury.

CHAPTER XVI

BEHIND BARRED DOORS

While Polly was pounding on the door to warn the Mocking Bird that the police of Scotland Yard were closing in around him, Fifi was fighting behind it to save herself from his hateful kisses. The Mocking Bird was a madman in his fury at Fifi's new born hate and disgust for him. He held her in a vise-like grip, from which she struggled with all her strength to escape. She darted her head back and forth on her shoulders to dodge his eager mouth and didn't feel the pain which his talon-like hands inflicted on her delicate flesh. So intent was the Mocking Bird on forcing his caresses upon Fifi that he didn't hear the pounding on the door until Polly's knuckles were torn and bloody.

Before he opened it, the detectives were in the main room of the Mission flashing their pocket lights on the already awakened faces of the human wrecks who filled it. They went here and there to every one of them, asking:

"Have you seen the Mocking Bird?"

In the thoroughness of their questioning they did not see Polly against the door at the far end of the room and as she slipped within, she was beyond their vision.

The Mocking Bird held one gorilla-like arm

around the struggling reluctant form of Fifi as he opened the door and there was something beast-like in his face as he snarled at Polly:

"You? Again? Get out. Damn you!"

But Polly bravely forced her way forward. She suppressed a scream as the Mocking Bird crushed her foot cruelly as she kept it between the door and the frame to prevent him from slamming it in her face. She whispered heavily:

"Scotland Yard men outside."

With his other arm, the Mocking Bird dragged her in and closed it after her. He had caught the gleams of the police flashlights and he knew that Polly spoke the truth.

Fifi fell heavily to the floor as the Mocking Bird released his grip. He rushed into the bed room and closed the door after him. The key turned swiftly in the lock and with a mighty effort he swung a table across it. More quickly than any ordinary eye could follow him he stripped his Mocking Bird clothes from his body.

By the time the Scotland Yard men had reached the far end of the room he had ripped open the wardrobe in the bedroom and was thrusting himself into the Bishop's garments. He dressed with lightning swiftness and when he had completely changed his attire, he convulsively dislocated his arms and legs to assume the Bishop's crippled form.

He sped his movements, even as a cripple as

he heard the Scotland Yard men rap on the outer door. After some delay, he heard the door open and he busied himself hiding the Mocking Bird garments under the mattress of the large bed.

Pausing a moment in his quick work of concealing his own Mocking Bird clothes, he heard the voice of men questioning Polly and Fifi.

"Have you seen the Mocking Bird?" the men asked.

He grinned as he heard Polly speak for both of them:

"No."

"Do you know where we might find him?" the male voice continued.

"I haven't any idea, sir," the Mocking Bird heard Polly reply.

"And you, my lass," the Mocking Bird understood the detective was asking Fifi, "Have you seen him."

The Mocking Bird chuckled to hear Polly speak up, not trusting Fifi, to reply:

"This is a little French girl, sir, a stranger, sir, who speaks very little English, sir; she works with me in the Music Hall, sir, and she doesn't understand, sir, who the Mocking Bird is, sir."

Somehow, even Polly's apparent frankness and politeness did not dissuade the detectives from a thorough search. The Mocking Bird hastily patted the mattress to hide that it had been recently disturbed as he heard heavy foot-steps

approach the bed room door. Then came a rattling jerk on the locked door's knob. It failed to open. A gruff voice commanded:

"Open up!"

Polly stepped to the door, and put her hand on the detective's arm, as if there was something she wanted to say to him. Fifi looked at her in amazement. She couldn't understand why Polly should want to interfere with the law taking its course against such a man as the Mocking Bird, but she said nothing.

The detective turned sternly on Polly.

"My good woman," he warned her. "It's a serious offense to interfere with an officer of the law and to aid a criminal to escape. It's my duty to make a thorough inspection of these premises which have often harboured this Mocking Bird miscreant and you'll not persuade me against doing my duty. You haven't a chance in the world to keep me from gaining entrance to that room and you'd better hold your tongue, for if you're caught in any lies it will go hard with you."

Polly's head sank and the officer resumed his pounding on the door.

The Mocking Bird knew that the door and its lock were made of stout stuff. He had seen to that. The moment had come for him again to enact the invisible drama of the two brothers, one good and one bad, which had served himself so well earlier in the day by destroying the confi-

dence of West End Eddy in Fifi's faithfulness to him. He became intent and earnest as he prepared for his great artistic effort, on which he relied to extricate him from the tightest corner into which his career of crime had brought him. Gone from his mind now was all thought of winning Fifi, of revenge against West End Eddy. The Mocking Bird nerved himself to the supreme effort of his career of dual impersonation to save his own skin.

So clever and convincing was his performance as heard on the other side of the barred door that Polly was horrified. She really believed that the Mocking Bird, her Dan, was engaged in a life and death struggle with the Bishop. She loved both of them, the Bishop for his goodness and Dan for the goodness that she saw concealed under his wicked conduct. Her heart was torn with agony at what she believed was a struggle between brother and brother. But a look of extreme bewilderment came upon Fifi's face. It was the second time that day that the brothers had fought on the other side of the barred door and something queer stirred within her at this repetition of the earlier episode. Still she failed to suspect that the scene was staged. The sound of the supposed conflict on the inner side of the heavy barred door made the Scotland Yard man redouble his efforts to break down the barrier. The veins on his forehead stood out as he strained

his muscles to force it in. His lips were compressed, as he rallied all the power of a powerful back and shoulders and planted a heavy foot against a lower panel.

From within came the sound of falling chairs and crashing furniture. Under cover of these noises, the Mocking Bird made for the window and opened it. A glance into the court yard showed him that men with flash-lights were sweeping its walls.

Escape in that direction was probably impossible even if it were worth the risk of broken limbs and revolver shots. The Mocking Bird grinned. His scheme was best after all. He raised his voice shouting first as the Mocking Bird and then shrieking as the Bishop. It was a theatrical masterpiece. Suddenly as the Bishop, he cried pitiously:

"Dan! Dan! You're killing me!"

He held one hand across his throat really to cut his breath and make it sound as though the Mocking Bird were choking the Bishop.

A second Scotland Yard man came into the living room from the mission.

"Open up," the first one yelled. And as everything in the inner room was quiet, the first one said to his companion:

"Lend me a hand with that heavy chair, John, we've got to break down the door. There's probably been a murder done inside."

CHAPTER XVII

TOO LATE!

A convulsive shudder shook Limehouse Polly at the detective's words. It was easy to believe from the sounds of the terrific struggle that had gone on within that murder might have been done. She closed her eyes in dread. But even if the Mocking Bird had committed the unnatural crime of killing his own brother, she found her heart throbbing with the wish that he should escape before the detectives entered. Yes, she realized with surprise at her own perversity she wanted Dan to escape even if she had to kill the two detectives before her. She felt herself rousing her own strength so that if they pounced on him, she could be of real help when she went to his assistance. She knew she would risk a prison term for herself, murderer and fratricide that he was, to help him. Polly shoved Fifi back so that she would not be in the way when the struggle between the Mocking Bird and the two detectives should come. She looked at them as they lifted the chair to use it as a battering ram against the thick oak door. She planned to leap on them if they drew revolvers to shoot the Mocking Bird and knock it from their hands. With a mighty effort she restrained herself from tripping them and starting the struggle too soon. She knew

that if she moved too quickly, she would be disposed of before they moved at unfair odds on her dear Dan. Her ears were unnaturally keen for all sounds from behind the barricaded door and a smile crept over her face as she heard the feeble voice of the Bishop again. She smiled sardonically. The Scotland Yard men were wrong. The Mocking Bird hadn't murdered his brother after all.

Just then there was a terrible shriek, a blood curdling scream in the Bishop's voice. It sounded like the death yell. And when it died away, there was a solemn hush in the room where Fifi stood petrified beside Polly as the detectives poised the chair.

"One, two, three, now!" the first one shouted and they bent their mighty backs together. Under that mighty blow the door caved in as if it had been blown from the mouth of a cannon.

In its explosion into the bed room it carried the gnarled, twisted body of the Bishop ahead of it. It sent him spinning over a fallen chair and he fell heavily, sprawled on the other side of where it had tripped him. His head struck against the wall with a horrible hollow thump. As Polly and Fifi crowded after the detectives into the room, they saw the Bishop lying still and lifeless along the baseboard. It was sometime before the pitiful crumpled, crippled figure stirred. The force of the broken door had

knocked him out. But the detectives paid scant attention to him. They threw open the door of the closet. They poked flashlights and revolvers under the bed. They opened the wardrobe. Finally they were satisfied that the Mocking Bird was not in the room. They could scarcely conceal their chagrin that their slippery prey had eluded them again.

Regardless of the women, the leader couldn't help uttering a curse of disappointment. His companion picked up the Bishop and put him in a chair. At his touch, the Bishop writhed as if in torture. He opened his eyes and lifted a hand feebly, pointing toward the window.

"Out of that—he went," he said in a faint strained voice. Their glance followed his finger to the open window. They hurried to the window and flashed their lights. They noticed the flashes of the guards in the court yard.

"Damn funny they didn't catch him there," the leader muttered.

"Oh, he's a slippery eel, all right," his companion commented.

"But he won't get away this time," the first detective said. "There's not a place in the whole empire that'll be cool enough to hold him after this. I bet he doesn't get out of Limehouse."

The second detective busied himself trying to make the Bishop comfortable. He assured him:

"He'll never abuse you again, Bishop. We'll send him up for life."

One of the guards from the court yard entered the room. He asked:

"What were you fellows flashing for?"

The leader sneered.

Only to let you fellows know you let the Mocking Bird slip through your fingers again," he spat out contemptuously.

"There's two women in the room out here," the newcomer said. "Want me to take them along to be questioned?"

"Don't bother!" said the leader, as Polly and Fifi stood shaking at the suggestion. "They're needed here, I guess, to take care of the Bishop."

"Well," he continued after the court-yard man had left. "I don't see any more use of our staying here. We might as well go along now."

The second detective was kind enough to pause at the door and say to Polly:

"I think you'd better send for a doctor. The Bishop looks pretty well done up."

As he heard the door leading into the Mission close behind them the half flicker of a smile crossed the Bishop's face, in spite of the terrible pain which wracked him from head to foot. Once more the cunning of the Mocking Bird had saved him from his enemies, the officers of the law. He was eager for the moment when he could throw off the disguise which had served him so well, and

be himself, the Mocking Bird again. Polly came into the room. She was eager to do something to help him. Fifi followed her timidly. But with a weary hand, the Bishop waved them away. Until they were gone, he would have to keep up the pretense of being his second personality.

"Close the door," he said. "I want to be alone."

And respecting his mood, the women retreated and Polly closed the door behind her, leaving him to himself.

Half to herself Polly mused:

"I wonder where he is! God guard him carefully."

Fifi broke out in wonderment:

"You love him very dearly, don't you?"

"More than I can tell," the older woman replied.

"And why, since he's been so bad to you?" Fifi continued.

"Because he neds me," Polly explained. "Because I know that he has a soul, a soul that's good, in spite of all he's done. He's like a bad child, wayward, wilful, but some day he'll change, if he has the chance, if it's not too late—"

Polly shivered.

"Wat's ze matter?" Fifi asked anxiously.

"I was thinking that maybe he wouldn't have the chance. With his reputation, now that he's shot a detective, they won't give him a chance.

They'll shoot when they see him. Maybe he's dead now. Maybe tonight's his last night and he'll die before he's saved his soul!" Polly declared.

The little French girl put her arms around Limehouse Polly's shoulders and kissed her.

"Forgive me," she said.

"I don't blame you," Polly said. " I wouldn't blame the Bobbies for killing him. But I hope and pray they don't, just the same."

Polly fell to weeping.

"God knows when I'll ever see him again and how," she sobbed. Fifi tried to comfort her.

"No man is worth a woman's tears," she said.

"Don't say that," objected Polly. "You will be happy yet." But Fifi only shrugged her shoulders.

CHAPTER XVIII

A TERRIBLE TRAP

But even after the door closed behind him, the Mocking Bird-Bishop felt a strange lethargy. He sat still staring at the door. Despite his success in throwing the Scotland Yard men off his trail at the very instant their net was closing in about him he felt a strange foreboding. The events of the past few hours flashed across the screen of his consciousness, every one a triumph. And yet he felt no satisfaction in them. He felt a revulsion as if he had begun to develop a conscience. He stirred himself to throw off what he considered an unworthy mood. He tried to grin as he thought how his playing of the dual role had set Eddy at Fifi's throat, how he had cozened the simple, lovely Fifi, how he had trapped Eddy and had him prisoner, how despite his cruelty to her, Limehouse Polly had still been his slave in an emergency. With a supreme effort, he decided that the time had come to throw off the Bishop disguise and be himself again. This mental sickness which oppressed him, he thought, was the reflection of the false sentimental form he wore, although in the solitude in which Polly and Fifi had left him, he had allowed his Mocking Bird expressioned face to surmount his Bishop's body.

He placed his hands on the arms of the chair and tried to rise, but a spasm of pain contorted his face. He had been worse hurt than he thought. In his proper Mocking Bird's form he had received many a rough knock and quickly gotten over them. But this was the first time he had been hurt while his body was twisted. Slowly and with compressed lips, he made a strained deliberate effort to unlock his shoulder muscles. The excruciating pain was more than he could bear and brought beads of cold sweat to his forehead. He writhed while his eyes rolled in agony, but still failed to untwist the knotted muscles. A look of fear and doubt crossed his face. It was the first time in his long experience playing two dual personalities that he had had such difficulty. He needed time. He decided to go to the door and lock it and then to work patiently until he had succeeded in becoming the Mocking Bird again. His legs failed him. He gripped the arms of the chair with all the strength of his steely fingers and hard chunky forearms and tried to pull himself to his feet. At last with quivering cheeks and moisture starting from his eyes, he succeeded in rising and began an uncertain progress to the door. He tottered like a palsied man, one slow step after the other, and stretching out his arms to balance himself as though he were walking a tight rope. The effort was too much for him. After he had staggered

three short steps, he plunged precipitately to the floor. With a final desperate effort, he commenced to crawl to the door, determined not to permit an exposure of the dual personality which had served him so well. But in his slow, tortured wriggle toward the door, the pain became unbearable. A shriek of agony burst through his tightened lips, though he ground his teeth together in a wild attempt to keep his mouth closed.

Disgusted at this evidence of weakness, he lashed his body into an effort to rise. He succeeded in getting first to one knee and then to another. With a cruel effort of his will, he spurred his tortured muscles to lift him to his feet and straightened his legs. He hovered upright unsteadily and then his knees sagged under him. There was a loud thud and a suppressed scream as he fell heavily to the floor and lay in a dead faint.

His body was still in a limp heap on the floor when the uncanny sound brought Fifi and Polly rushing from the Mission. They snatched the door open and saw the melancholy figure on the floor. Polly leaned over him and turned the limp body around so that the face, relaxed and pale, with its open, unseeing eyes confronted her.

"Get a glass of water, quickly!" she commanded Fifi. Gently she raised the Bishop's head and held the glass to his lips. He

regained consciousness slowly. The Mocking Bird look of desperation had faded from his eyes. This time he was, without effort or pretense on his part, the Bishop. He leaned back easily in her strong, capable arms. He looked at her kindly and gratefully.

Polly comforted him and then turning to Fifi she cried:

"Quick, get a doctor!"

At the words, Fifi left the room swiftly, without waiting to look behind her.

The Bishop fainted again. Polly leaned over him frantically.

"Bishop! Bishop!" she called, pleadingly. She bathed his face quickly with the water in the glass. She forced the glass to his lips. But still he remained quiet. Half lifting half dragging him, she managed to get him to the bed and into it. Tenderly, she placed a coverlet over him and sat on the edge of the bed, anxiously awaiting Fifi's return with the physician.

After many worried moments, Polly saw the Bishop's eyes open slightly. He writhed a little as pain returned to his awakening body. He turned his eyes slowly to hers. His breath came in convulsive gasps. He muttered in a low monotone with great effort:

"Polly, Polly, I'm done in—"

The effort of speaking exhausted his vitality and he sank back inertly once more. But he

exercised a supreme effort of will to open his eyes which he kept fixedly on the worried woman at his bed side. He roused himself to speak again, voicing the hideous fear which had taken root in his heart, talking as though he were speaking to himself:

"I'll never get back. I'm locked in this shape for life."

Once the words were out of his mouth pain and weakness made him slump again and close his eyes.

There was a mysterious menace in that short speech which puzzled and alarmed Polly. She plainly displayed her perplexity and amazement. She knit her brows and wondered:

"What does he mean by 'locked in this shape for life?' "

The Bishop opened his eyes and saw the queer expression on her face. He asked softly, with a wince:

"Polly, don't you know me?"

The words increased Polly's bewilderment. She stared down at him, wide-eyed. Her glance searched every feature. And the Bishop looked into her eyes with a pathetic eagerness, begging recognition.

Like a lightning flash, the great discovery came to Polly. The doubt, the surprise, the wonder at his words vanished like river mist before the noon-day sun. The truth came home to her at

last with all the disturbing force of a nearby thunderclap at midnight. The body was the body of the Bishop but the face was the face of the Mocking Bird.

"Dan! Dan!" she cried with a new born grief and sympathy.

He nodded eagerly and she looked again to make sure that it was not all some night-mare, some mistake. No, she could not mistake the face of the man she had loved for so many years. She put an arm tenderly about him and began to sob softly and quietly. And her heart warmed with a great glow of happinesss amid her grief at the Mocking Bird's first submission to her maternal affection for him.

CHAPTER XIX

A NEW PERIL

Fifi darted back to the Mission, a keen faced doctor of the Limehouse district, with his black instrument bag in his right hand after her. As the derelicts saw the doctor enter the Mission and follow Fifi to the rear stairs, alarm showed on every feature. They sensed at once that something had happened to the Bishop. Four of the more eager ones crowded after Fifi up the little stairway to the living quarters.

Fifi knocked at the bed room door, and answered her name to Polly's question, "Who's there?" with a declaration:

"I've brought the doctor."

The Mocking Bird seized Polly's hand.

"The doctor mustn't examine me," he whispered earnestly, "He'll find out."

He writhed in agony with the effort of speaking. Polly urged him:

"Grit your teeth! Hold tight!"

She rose in a quick business like fashion and entered the outer room, closing the door behind her. She said:

"He's better now. He's sleeping. We'd better not disturb him. Thank you Doctor Graham, for coming so promptly, but if we need you we'll call you again. The four derelicts who had followed the physician up the stairs fell to their

knees and offered up prayers for the Bishop's quick recovery, as the doctor left.

When he had gone, Polly opened the door, so that the four recipients of the Bishop's bounty could see him propped up on pillows in the big bed. One of them mumbling his poor prayers with the others, broke off praying with tears in his eyes to exclaim, as he saw the Bishop's pain-wracked face:

"Don't go away from us, Bishop. Yer our only 'elp and comfort."

The confidence and concern of the Mission inmates touched the Bishop deeply. A look of pain swept over his brow and he closed his eyes in another faint. The derelicts tiptoed back into the main room of the Mission again and Polly returned to the stricken man's side to make him more comfortable by straightening his pillows and coverings.

"Everybody's gone," she assured him, but he failed to respond. She spoke to him again, thinking that he was still feigning sleep and was unaware that the doctor had gone. Her efforts to arouse him became frantic with genuine alarm.

"Dan! Dan!" she called.

Finally he stirred a trifle. He opened his eyes. He asked:

"Where is she?"

Polly's figure slumped. She had not expected

the broken man, who had responded for the first time to her motherly tenderness toward him to be thinking of Fifi at this hour. Hopelessly she replied:

"Out there!"

Brokenly, the Mocking Bird told her:

"Bring her to me!"

Slowly and despiritedly, Polly rose to obey his request as she had always done, no matter how much obedience had cost her.

Fifi followed Polly into the room and at Polly's gesture approached the Bishop's bed. Then Polly turned to leave them alone together, her head sunk forward in pitiful dejection.

"Stop, Polly!" he commanded. "Open the door to the secret room in the clothes closet. Polly carried out the request and the secret panel slid back. In his surprise and eagerness to escape, Eddy bounded through the panel into the bed room, where Fifi stood beside the stricken Bishop. His astonished gaze shifted from one to the other and rested keenly on Polly, whose presence there was unexpected.

As Eddy stood there, wondering what had happened, wondering what was going to happen next, the Bishop spoke:

"The Mocking Bird has gone. You'll never see him again."

Turning to Fifi, the Bishop went on:

"Go to him, my girl."

Fifi hesitated. She was plainly timorous. Eddy still remained aloof from her. His knit brows revealed that he was still intensely puzzled by his new freedom, the Bishop's apparent illness, and the strange statement that he would never see the Mocking Bird again.

In a labored voice, resting between each gush of words, the Mocking Bird explained to the bewildered pair how he had plotted their misunderstanding toward each other. In his efforts to right the wrong he had done them, he made a pitiless exposure of the double part he had played and put himself at their mercy to betray him, if they had felt any resentment. At the end, he begged their forgiveness.

"The Mocking Bird made me do what I did." he explained. "It was against my better self."

Fifi flew to Eddy's side and he folded her lovingly in his arms. Tears streamed down Limehouse Polly's face at the Mocking Bird's atonement and the renewed happiness of the two lovers.

They bowed to the repentant Mocking Bird, and Eddy said:

"Come, we'll go!"

As they left the room, Polly flew impulsively to the Mocking Bird's side and leaned over him with a wealth of joy beaming out upon him.

"You were splendid, Dan," she cried.

And he answered her:

"I have no pain now, I am at peace."

A spiritual light shone in his eyes, as Polly caressed him gently. But over her face there was a veil of anxiety as she looked at the twisted limbs of her loved one. She shook her head sadly, like a mother hovering over a sick child.

CHAPTER XX

TRANSFIGURATION

And with Polly sitting beside him, the weary man sank into slumber. While he slept Polly's thoughts were busy. The firmness of her cheeks and lips showed that she had formed an inflexible resolution. When the Bishop awoke, all of the love of her life-time devotion to the Mocking Bird showed in her eyes. She stroked his coverlet and seized his weakened hand firmly in her own.

"Dan," she said. "I've been thinking a lot. I can still make 'em laugh, Dan. I'll slave for you. You don't need to worry. I'll take care of you."

The man turned a little on his bed of pain, as if her words brought him a magic balm of ease. Determination and resolution had replaced the uncontrolled animal fierceness of his Mocking Bird personality, as well as the assumed unctuousness of his Bishop one. He listened eagerly as she continued:

"I'll take you to America, Dan. We'll get a surgeon where you aren't known, the best one we can get, and there's lots of good surgeons in America. We'll get you out of this twisted trap of bone and muscle and make you yourself again."

But the man shook his head slowly, but firmly. He said with distinct finality:

"Polly, I tell you, the Mocking Bird is dead!"

His tone impressed her. The earnest eagerness with which he faced her made her jump for joy as it convinced her that he had made a vow and would live up to it. His hand sought hers as he went on:

"We'll stay here, Polly. They need me, those poor souls out there in the Mission."

She nodded her agreement to his plan and he drew her more closely to him as he asked:

"I have done some good, haven't I?"

He looked at her with a wistful eagerness for approval and she thrilled him by her musical, intense response:

"Yes, yes, indeed, you have!"

For a long time he was still looking at her tenderly.

"Life is what we make it for good, or ill," he reflected aloud, unconsciously echoing Polly's philosophy which not so long ago he had flouted.

She gathered him into her arms and nestled his head upon her bosom. Her prayers had been answered. The Mocking Bird had been transfigured. From now on, she resolved that she too would consecrate herself to the service of humanity, in thanksgiving for the joy at his salvation.

THE END.

The Following Short Story Adaption Of
A Blind Bargain Is From

MOVING PICTURE STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE
DEVOTED TO PHOTOPLAYS AND PLAYERS

Vol. XXI JANUARY 19, 1923 No. 525

A BLIND BARGAIN

(Goldwyn Film)

Story by BARRY PAIN *Scenario by J. G. HAWKS*

Directed by WALLACE WORSLEY

Adapted from the Photoplay by

ETHEL ROSEMON

THE PLAYERS

Dr. Lamb
The Hunchback } *Lon Chaney*

Angela Wytcherly.....*Jacqueline Logan*

Mrs. Lamb.....*Fontaine LaRue*

Robert Sandell.....*Raymond McKee*

PRICE 7¢

Moving Picture Stories

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO PHOTO-PLAYS AND PLAYERS

Vol. XXI
No. 525
Jan. 19
1923

Limerick Contest

Jing, Jang, Jingle,
Hear the prizes cry,
"Ting, Tang, Tingle,
Come, give us a try."

"The Hands Beautiful," by Clara Kimball Young

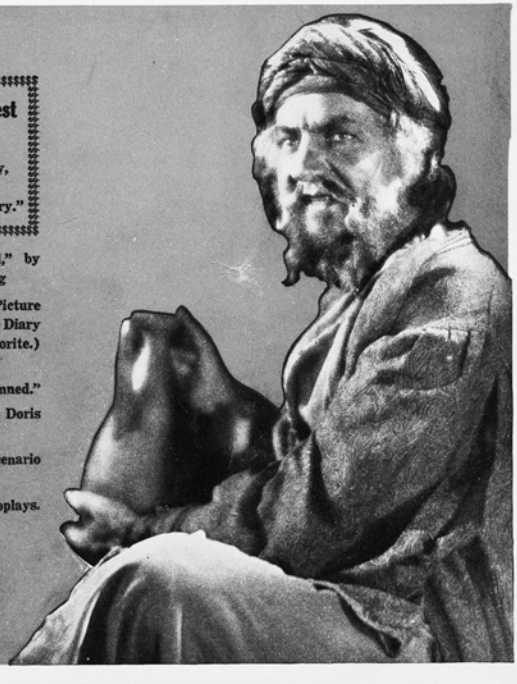
"Confessions of a Picture Star." (The Intimate Diary of a Screenland Favorite.) By Ethel Rosemon.

"The Beautiful and Damned."

"Keeping Fit with Doris Kenyon."

Helpful Hints for the Scenario Writer.

Stories of Popular Photoplays.



Science was his God. To it he sacrificed home, family, friends. One burning desire consumed him, to lay at the feet of his idol an offering that would emblazon his name on the annals of the medical profession. In his perfectly equipped laboratory on the outskirts of the city he performed many secret experiments—experiments of which the world never dreamed, experiments which claimed a score of innocent victims in the cause of progress.

"And so it is believed that youth can be restored by the transference of a gland of an ape to a human being."

Dr. Lamb closed the volume with a laugh that resounded unpleasantly through his quiet study.

"Restore youth?" he murmured to himself. "That is nothing. Why should man ever grow old? If we were to determine the span of human life by comparison with the animal kingdom man should live at least a hundred and fifty years. And my man shall—a hundred and fifty years of youth with no age lurking in the background to claim its prey."

And as the noted surgeon mused over his discovery in another section of the city Robert Sandell, of the American Legion, was facing the supreme test of bravery, for in the next room of the humble little apartment which he now called home his mother was lying upon a bed of pain. With eyes closed, head bowed upon his arms crossed on the table before him, he tried to shut out the vision of life without her.

"Her condition is very serious," the family physician

broke in upon his anguish. “She should be operated upon at once by the greatest surgeon you can procure. I can give you no other hope.”

With a sympathetic clasp of the hand the doctor left him. Alone he became conscious again of the crumpled piece of paper he held so tightly, the paper containing the few lines which had so completely shattered his hopes:

“Our readers have found your reminiscences of the war interesting, but for the present we have discontinued the publication of war stories.”

Later that same evening Robert Sandell took the oldest—and the most disastrous—means of getting rich quick. When Dr. Lamb walked briskly through the Park on his way home from a consultation with some of his colleagues Robert was sitting on a bench right in his path waiting for a victim. To him the surgeon was opportunity; his dire need of money was the door at which he was knocking. But the young man was no match for the older with a strength that had been the marvel of his friends since his college days. A clever twist of the hand at his assailant's throat and the latter fell in a crumpled heap on the ground. Dr. Lamb stooped down and scanned the pale, worried face carefully. His keen eye detected no criminal tendency, no sign that would connect the would-be thief with his present occupation. He hesitated a second, then the shrewd look of the experimenter spread over his countenance as he lifted the limp form in his arms and hailed a passing taxi.

The door of the big house standing alone in the

suburbs was opened at the doctor's ring by a little hunchback whose face was as disfigured as his body. His eyes took on a new look of terror as he glimpsed the burden his master was carrying and the terror was not for himself. Through the half-open door of the study he furtively watched the surgeon's movements and a shudder ran through his bent body as he saw him take the blood test of the unconscious man. It brought back in all its vividness the test of which he had been the subject but a few years back.

When ten minutes later Robert Sandell awoke to a knowledge of his surroundings he found himself in a luxuriously appointed room, the only other occupant of which was the man he had attempted to rob earlier in the evening. He drew his hand across his eyes and then steadily returned the gaze that was fixed upon him.

“You are not a thief! Why did you attack me?” Dr. Lamb inquired.

“I was desperate. I had to have money. There didn't seem to be any other way,” the young man replied in a voice that bespoke his utter dejection.

“Suppose you tell me all about it. Perhaps I can help,” the surgeon suggested, drawing a chair up beside his guest.

Robert sighed deeply and then after a brief pause began his story.

“As far back as I can remember we were always in good circumstances. I was the only child, and after I had completed my college course my mother

encouraged me to be a writer. She had literary talent herself which she hoped would find expression in me, her only son. I was glad to follow her advice, as it had always been my greatest joy to make up stories even when I was a little tot. Shortly after my return from college I became engaged to the girl who lived next-door. Angela—that was her name—had great faith in my future as a writer and was my chief inspiration in those days when almost every mail brought one of my prolific efforts back from an editor. Then my father died and mother and I discovered to our dismay that with his death almost our entire income ceased. We were forced to give up our home, and it was with a heavy heart that I bade Angela goodbye.

"'Don't worry, Bob,' she said. I can see her now standing beside the rosebush in the garden. 'Some postponed weddings may be unlucky, but I know ours won't be.'

"'I am going to work and work and work and come back to you a bigger success than either of us has ever dreamed.'

"Then came the war. I was detained in Germany and when I returned to this country I found my mother very ill. The doctor has just told me that her only hope is an operation by a thoroughly skilled surgeon."

During this recital the eagerness in Doctor Lamb's eyes had grown in intensity until now his face seemed a mere background for the two bright sparks shining beneath the straight eyebrows.

"How much of a sacrifice would you be willing to

make for your mother?" he asked gravely.

"Doctor," the boy returned breathlessly, for the man's bearing and general manner had given him the correct clue to his profession, "there isn't anything I wouldn't do for her."

Without hesitation the surgeon took down the receiver and called a number. "Send an ambulance at once for Mrs. Margaret Sandell," he said to the party at the other end of the wire. "She lives at 461 Cedar street."

The next minute the doctor left the room to give orders for the reception of the sick woman. The door had scarcely closed behind him when the one at the other end opened softly and a pale, sweet-faced lady in whose eyes lurked the ghosts of secret sorrows crossed the heavy carpet and stood before Robert. It was the scientist's wife who lived in mortal terror of her husband and prayed each day that he would recover from the obsession that possessed him. Immediately upon the stranger's entrance the hunchback had notified her by means of his pad and pencil that another victim had been brought to the house. The pang of pain had gone through her heart at the knowledge that her husband had in some way found a new subject for his experiments. As she looked into the clean, open face of the young man before her her desire to protect him from his probable fate swept over her in a wave of maternal tenderness. She gently laid her hand upon his shoulder and, bending her head so that he might catch the whisper that was scarcely more than a breath said:

"You poor boy, I wish I could help you."

At that moment the opening door announced the doctor's return and she glided from the room as noiselessly as she had entered.

"I am having your mother brought here that I may make a thorough examination," the surgeon told him.

Robert rose and eagerly seized the hand of his benefactor.

"I don't know how to thank you, doctor, but why have you done all this for me?" he asked.

"You will see later on," Dr. Lamb answered, and Robert in his gratitude for the care of his mother did not notice the sinister tone in his voice.

A half-hour later, the examination of Mrs. Sandell completed, the surgeon returned to the son, who was pacing the floor of the adjoining room in the heat of anxiety.

"Your mother is dying," the doctor announced, and to the boy's ears his solemn tone echoed and re-echoed through the quiet room.

"You must save her! You must save her!" he cried, grasping the surgeon's hand and falling to his knees beside him.

Dr. Lamb's eyes narrowed with shrewdness in which there was a spark of the triumph of the scientist.

"I will if after she has recovered you will submit to a surgical operation in which I am interested."

Robert opened his mouth to give expression to the ready promise when his attention was arrested for a brief instant by the face of the hunchback grimacing from behind the folds of the portiere that covered the door. The eyes held a warning, a plea, the head shook back and forth in a vigorous movement of disapproval. But the life of the young man's mother was at stake. The hunchback and the message he was so plainly endeavoring to send passed almost unnoticed as he said eagerly:

"I will do anything you ask if you will only save her."

Dr. Lamb went to the bookcase on the wall near by and returned with a Bible in his hand.

"Swear it," he commanded.

With one hand on the Bible Robert took the desired oath, and as he did so the hunchback, still gazing at him through the portieres, gave a sigh of hopelessness which was combined with great compassion for this new victim.

"Perhaps you would like to see your mother now," Dr. Lamb suggested as he returned the Bible to its place and with Robert following led the way to the sick-room. The eyes of the woman lying feebly back against the pillows brightened as her son knelt at her side, grasped her hand in his and covered it with kisses.

"Everything is going to be all right, mother dear," he

said in a voice that was very near to tears. “Dr. Lamb is going to make you well.”

Within a week at the college of surgery the noted surgeon fulfilled his part of the bargain and performed the operation that was probably the most skillful in the history of medical science.

“Lamb is a wonder,” some of his colleagues commented as the woman, still under the influence of ether, was wheeled from the operating room. “The most marvelous feat on record.”

As the days passed the surgeon, holding the mother as a hostage, knew that the son would not forswear his bargain.

“Your mother is out of danger,” he announced a few weeks later. “Go away and clear your mind of worry. You must be in the best possible condition for the experiment I wish to perform.”

He held out a roll of bills, and as the young man hesitated added:

“Accept it as a loan if you wish, but go away for a while. Take a trip to the girl you told me about. I will come for you when everything is ready. You must be prepared to leave with me at a moment's notice.”

Knowing that his mother was on the way to recovery, and feeling that his luck was about to change, Robert hastened to Angela with the news. Meanwhile the eagerness of the surgeon increased as the days brought the time of the operation nearer. Each record

which he kept in his diary breathed the confidence of a man who was on the eve of a great discovery.

"Up to this time all the specimens I have had have been imperfect," he wrote one day. "Robert Sandell has a physical organism that is without a flaw. This time my experiment cannot fail of success. My name will go down through the ages as the greatest contributor to science that this generation has produced."

Meanwhile Mrs. Lamb and the hunchback, who were bound together by a unique tie, a common terror of the surgeon, saw each new day dawn with a shrinking of the heart.

Together they sought ways of trying to prevent this new sacrifice to the madness of the scientist.

"If we only knew the exact time," the wife often remarked to the misshapened figure that was almost her shadow.

Then one day the scientist went out and through absent-mindedness left the door of his study open.

"Now is the time to find out," the hunchback eagerly wrote on his pad.

Together they went to the operating room. Here they found every detail for the coming operation carried out with scientific thoroughness. In his diary they read the simple entry:

"All is in readiness. The great day will soon be here."

"We must stop this, but how?" Mrs. Lamb said in desperation.

At this same moment Robert and Angela were attending a charity ball, the crowning event of the social season. Toward midnight, when the young couple had retired to a corner of the music-room for the exchange of a few whispered words known to the youth of all ages, a mysterious stranger appeared. Removing his glasses, he gazed at the young woman, while a smirk that was intended for a smile turned the corners of his mouth.

"Pardon the intrusion, but I, too, have an interest in Robert," he said quietly, "and I would like to speak to him alone."

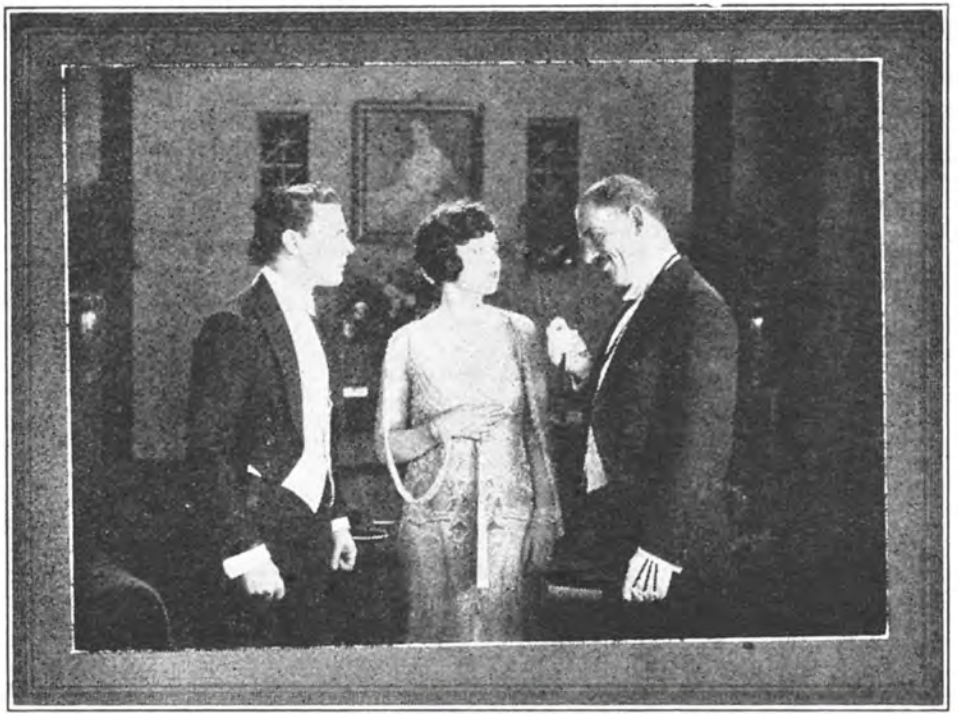
With an uneasy backward glance at her fiancé the girl withdrew from the room. When she was beyond hearing Dr. Lamb addressed Robert in words fraught with sinister meaning:

"I advise you not to assume too many obligations," he said slowly. "Dispense with one before you take up another."

"I intend to keep my promise," Robert announced quietly.

"I want you to return to my house without a moment's delay," the surgeon directed.

"I am ready," Robert replied as he left the room to get his hat.



"Pardon the intrusion, but I, too, have an interest in Robert," he said quietly, "and I would like to speak to him alone."

He found Angela waiting for him outside, her woman's intuition combined with her great love for the young man warning her that he was in danger.

“Robert, there is something I should know,” she began fearfully. “What are you keeping from me? What hold has that man on you?”

“It's just a business appointment I have with Dr. Lamb,” he assured her.

He kissed her hastily and joined the surgeon, who was waiting for him in the car at the foot of the road. During the journey into town Dr. Lamb could scarcely restrain his eagerness to be about his experiment. When they arrived at his house he immediately left Robert alone, enjoining him to retire early to be in good condition for the coming day. Again, as on the first evening in the surgeon's house, Mrs. Lamb came to him when she learned that her husband had gone to his room.

“You are in great danger. Leave while there is time. I will look after your mother,” she told him hurriedly.

“Dr. Lamb saved her life and he has my promise,” he reminded her.

“Do you want to look like him?” she asked, indicating the hunchback, who was at her side.

Robert's gaze fixed itself as if fascinated by his very ugliness on the blurred eyes of the unfortunate man, the circles of loose skin beneath them—skin that showed the pricks of many needles—the twisted

mouth—every expression of which was a leer—the lips that strove to form words to which they could not give utterance, the misshaped body that seemed to cry out in its painful effort to assume an upright position. Then his eyes returned to the woman who was doing her best to save him perhaps from a like fate, and she knew by their expression that he was still unconvinced.

"Show him," she started to direct the hunchback, when she was interrupted by the return of the doctor, who had crossed noiselessly to her side.

"Your mother is waiting to say good-night to you, Robert," he announced and the flowing sleeve of his wife's gown hid from the young man the cruel vise in which he had grasped her slender wrist.

"I will have no more of your interference," he told her when his prospective victim had left the room. "Do you understand?"

And while Robert was deceiving his mother with a gay description of the charity ball Mrs. Lamb was desperately planning some way to save him from the result of her husband's madness.

"I will operate in the morning. Everything is in readiness. The world shall proclaim me the greatest living scientist, and you, my son, will be the glorious instrument in benefiting mankind," the surgeon said as he bade Robert good-night, trying to imbue the young man with some of his own enthusiasm.

Late that night when quiet reigned through the large house Robert's troubled reverie was interrupted by the

cautious entrance of the hunchback bearing in his hand a slip of paper containing the words, “Go with him,” and the signature of the surgeon's wife. Led by a vague fear, a curiosity that seemed in some way apart from his own future, the young man followed his strange guide. The course led him down to the physician's study through a secret door in the wall to a dimly lighted passageway and then down a long flight of steps into a subterranean apartment containing a complete laboratory. Then the hunchback crooked his bony finger for Robert to follow closely as he opened a huge iron gate at the other end of the apartment. He switched on the light and there was a snarling, a growling from the passageway beyond as the occupants of the rows of cages, half men, half apes, became aware of the visitor's presence.

“This is what he would make of you,” the guide's eyes warned the young man, who had turned away in misery from the wretched sights, realizing at last the grim nature of his bargain.

The next second a strong arm flung the hunchback up against the cages and grasped Robert tightly about the shoulders.

“You fiend,” the latter muttered, trying to free himself from the doctor's hands, “you would have made me like them.”

“The hunchback was my first experiment,” his captor returned. “If he had been as perfect as you I would have succeeded. When my operation is over you will have the strength of twenty men, you will have a hundred years to live and you will not change any in

appearance."

The light of the madman shining in his eyes warned Robert to humor him.

"To-morrow I shall be ready for you," he returned quietly.

"Not to-morrow—but now. I will operate immediately," Dr. Lamb announced, seizing him in a grasp that was like a band of iron.

"I was willing to risk my life in payment for my mother's, but never this," Robert said as he struggled to free himself.

Back and forth the two men fought, down the passageway, then into the operating room. It was a matter of a few minutes before the doctor had his unconscious victim strapped to the table. Then he hurried back to the cages to procure the gland that was to be transferred to the body of Robert Sandell. In that second the latter, unstrapped by Mrs. Lamb and the nurse, regained consciousness and leaped from the table in preparation for his escape. But the hunchback had arranged that for him, had laid well his plan to put all future victims beyond the mad surgeon's power. Suddenly the cry of a wild ape rang out and the first result of the devilish experiment turned from his position at the keyhole with a leer of satisfaction on his distorted face.

Robert's lips formed the words, "Dead?" and the hunchback nodded in assent.

"He was a great man even in his madness," Mrs. Lamb said softly, "but in his search for knowledge he forgot God."

Six months later Angela turned from the reviews of "A Sacrifice to Science" by Robert Sandell and bent upon her husband a look in which pride was still mingled with fear at the thought of his narrow escape from the living death he had described so vividly in his story, a story that had been given wide publicity as the actual experience of the author.

The first result of the devilish experiment turned from his position at the keyhole with a leer of satisfaction on his distorted face.

THE MOCKING BIRD / A BLIND BARGAIN GLOSSARY

Abashed – Ashamed, disconcerted, or embarrassed.

Acquiescence – A nonverbal reluctant acceptance of something.

Adroitly – In a skillful or clever way.

Alight – Get out of the Rolls Royce.

Ardor – Enthusiasm for being attracted to another person.

Assent – Acknowledgment.

Awry – Askew or messy.

Baled Hides – A bundle of tanned animal hides.

Blandishments – Intent to coax someone with flattery.

Bobbies – British policemen.

Cant – Insincere.

Clasp Knife – A folding pocket knife.

Coquetry – A flirtatious manor.

Coverlet – Bedding, a bedspread cover.

Cozened – Tricked, deceived.

Cuspidor – A spittoon.

Décolleté – Low neckline.

Fags – Cigarettes.

Forswear – Retract, renounce.

Fratricide – Killing of his brother.

Furtively – Attempting to avoid notice or attention.

Harry – Bothersome interrogation.

Imbue – Instill or influence.

Incorrigible – Bad behavior beyond being reformable or correction.

Lascar – A sailor from Southeast Asia or India.

Licentious – A lacking or disregard for legal or moral restraints.

Mascared – eyes with mascara on them.

Maudlin – Drunken self-pity or tearful sentimentality.

Ostentation – Excessive display.

Perplexity – Inability understand something, puzzled.

Portiere - A curtain hung at a doorway.

Prams – Baby carriages.

Qui Vive – On the lookout or alert.

Reproach – Disapproval.

Reverie – Day dream.

Sardonic – grimly cynical or mocking.

Stratagem – A plan for surprising or deceiving with a scheme or trickery.

Swells – Stylish people dressed in the height of fashion; of high social position or competence.

Tête-à-tête – a private conversation between two people.

Timorous – Nervousness, fearful.

Tooting – Cocaine snorting.

Trice – In an instant, or a very short time.

Unctuous – Excessive moralistic fervor or piousness.

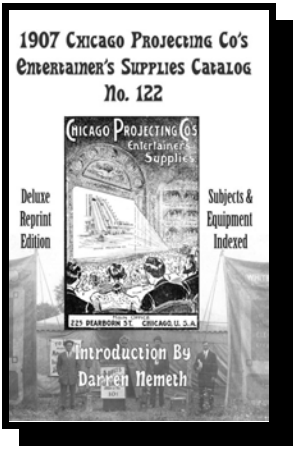
Unctuously – Insincere friendliness.

Verbena Perfume – A fragrance based on a American herbaceous plant with heads of bright showy flowers.

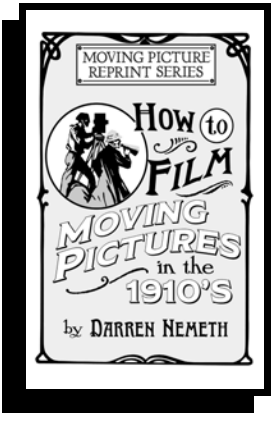
Vivisectionist – Someone who experiments on live animals for scientific research.

MOVING PICTURE REPRINT SERIES

1907 Chicago Projecting Co.'s Entertainer Supplies Catalog No. 122; Deluxe Edition



Digitally restored traveling motion picture exhibitor's catalog and rare documents have all of the equipment and instructions needed to have a successful career in pre-Hollywood traveling film exhibition. Hundreds of illustrations and primary documents from a forgotten era of cinema, published shortly before movie theatres were beginning to take over the industry. 438 pages.

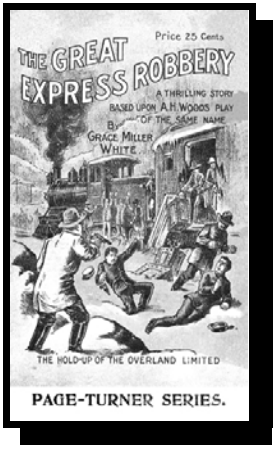


How to Film Moving Pictures in the 1910's

Packed with hand cranked movie camera manuals, pamphlets and photos from the 1910's. Among the hundreds of illustrations are original 35mm nitrate frames showing examples of lost camera negatives and positive release prints. Step by step instructions unseen in over a century and much more! 229 pages.

PAGE - TURNER SERIES

The Great Express Robbery

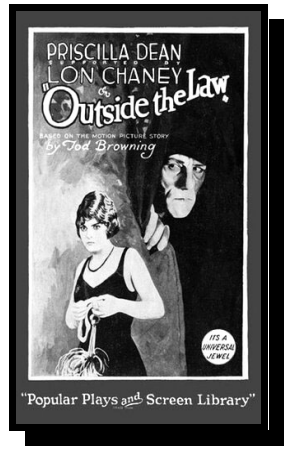


Fully restored blood and thunder pulp novel from 1907. The peaceful lives of two young women come to a violent standoff near their father's coal mine outside of San Francisco. Peril and heroism follow in the midst of thunder, romance and vile outlaws. Will these two brave heroines be able to stop the Great Express Robbery? 132 pages.

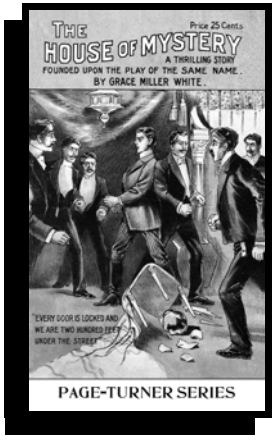
Four Dime Novels From The Old Sleuth

The Old Detective presents four urban crime and adventure stories from 1896 and 1898. Carefully digitally restored from the original novels that have been out of print since the 1920's. Thrilling rapid fire tales of bold fearless courage written in the era of gas light and lanterns. Loaded with quick plots, action, murder and mystery. The Old Sleuth: "The Most Thrilling Detective Stories Ever Published." 438 pages.

Outside The Law



This quick moving crime thriller greatly expands on the plot of this Tod Browning film. Scenes that are brief in the movie are expanded with more detail, the main characters have a back story, the jewel heist at the mansion is deeper in suspense, and Lon Chaney's Black Mike Silva meets a much more grisly demise at the end that would not have passed the censors! This pulp adaption was published in 1926 with the movie's re-release, not long after the debut of *The Phantom Of The Opera*. 136 pages.



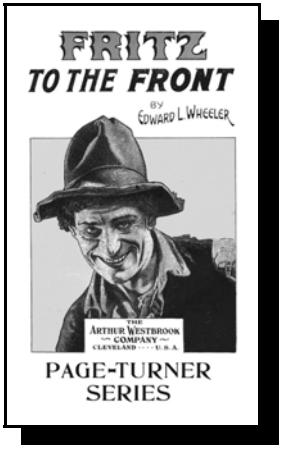
The House of Mystery

A human trafficking romantic thriller from 1905.

Little Bonny Colville was sent by her mother to New York City to search for her father who mysteriously disappeared. Instead she ends up captive in *The House Of Mystery* to be groomed into a "companion" for a much older millionaire.

Faith Worthing a ribbon department counter girl is blackmailed at work by someone she refused advances from. She has two quick choices: either spend her young life in prison for a rigged theft or come with him to *The House Of Mystery*. 186 pages.

Fritz to the Front; or, The Ventriloquist Scamp-Hunter



Fritz Snyder, a European born pawn broker from Philadelphia, is met with mayhem on a vacation ferry to an Atlantic City summer resort. Even more so when he arrives at New Jersey!

His detective and ventriloquist skills are employed to get him though a vicious thug's oceanfront hide-out, a bizarre remote island community and secret passages beneath a burning building.

Can he rescue a wealthy Irishman's kidnapped daughter? Better yet, can Fritz fool his own pursuers by throwing his voice out from the throat of a decapitated head?

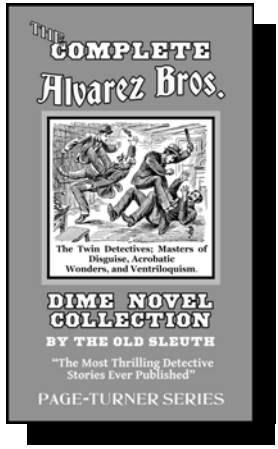
Originally published in *Beadle's Half-Dime Library* issue No. 213 as a short detective story on August 23, 1881, this rare expanded 1920s edition features Lon Chaney on the cover as "Gaspard The Good" from *The Trap* (1922, Universal Film Manufacturing Company).

Available Now...

www.MovingPictureReprintSeries.com

Giant Squid Audio Lab Company, Publishers.

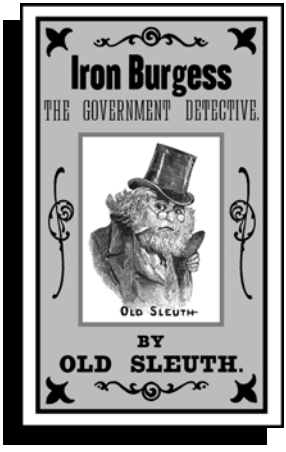
The Complete Alvarez Bros. Dime Novel Collection



A five novel story arc previously lost to the ages.

Born in 1882 or 3, the Alvarez twins developed what can be called natural superhero abilities due to a number of early childhood tragedies and training.

Originally published in 1898 as part of the *Old Sleuth's Own* series by *Parlor Car Publishing Company*, this restoration is derived from *J. S. Oglivie Publishing Co.* editions that were in print from 1900 to the early 1920's using the original *Parlor Car* printing plates. 430 pages.



Iron Burgess, The Government Detective

Fifteen years following the Civil War not much had changed for the better in the south. A region infested with prosperous whiskey distillers, counterfeiters, high level corruption, and executioners of government agents, until Washington DC sent their toughest agent, Iron Burgess to infiltrate the underworld and restore the law. Along the way he fights through unexpected supernatural mysteries and bloody encounters. Copyrighted in 1880 and originally published in 1885. This is the 1892 expanded version. 295 pages.

***RANSOM! The Story of a Lost Child; Intimate Chapters of a Film Star's Life* volumes 1 - 9**

Rediscover a lost 3,520 page, 110 issue epic about Janelle Elliot, a young woman who races the globe to rescue her stolen child held for ransom while balancing a career in Hollywood.

Elliot's never ending peril, disaster and torment while fighting to pull her baby out of the cruel hands of predators leads her into a series of sensational dramas and crisis, gaining national attention. Amidst this unwelcome publicity a movie studio signs her to a contract and molds her into a star in Pre-Code Hollywood, California.

Hollywood's "Pre-Code Era" began after the rapid spread of sound movies in 1929 until the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code censorship guidelines in 1934.

RANSOM! is a 1933 pulp trash odyssey with disaster, grisly murder and dramatic adventure in spades.

Written by *Grace Allen Hardy* at the height of the Lindbergh Baby abduction and murder scandal *Ransom!* was created for the average reader.

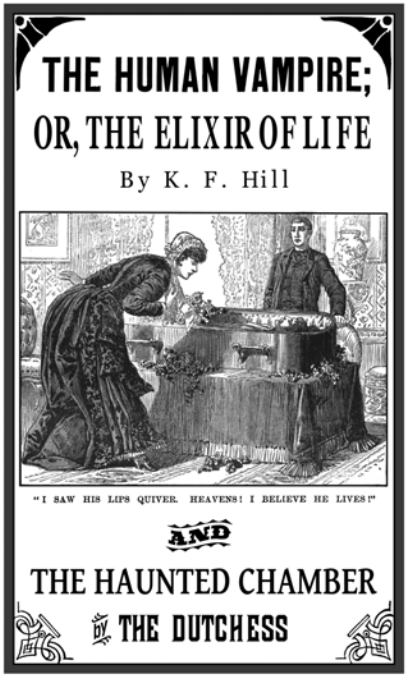
All nine volumes are slated to be in print by 2023.

...Available Now...

www.MovingPictureReprintSeries.com

Giant Squid Audio Lab Company, Publishers.

The Human Vampire; Or, The Elixir Of Life



Who is draining the lifeblood of young, vigorous children into his withered veins?

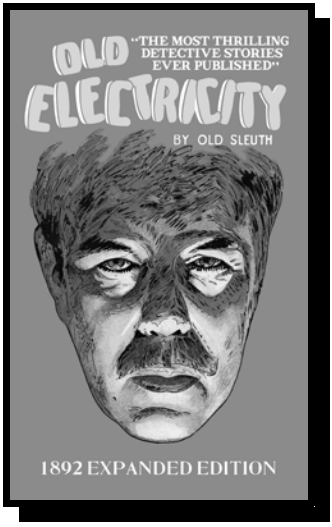
This lost American horror story from 1889 is an account of the lurid, sinful unrest of wealthy New Yorker Clifford Derwent. And also of young women who were wedded for their money and mysteriously widowed. About a manhunt for two beautiful twins snatched from their beds in the dead of night and the unspeakable murder of underprivileged children to brew an unhallowed "Magic Elixir."

And who is this man who gets younger?

A brother of one of the widows falls upon this grisly mystery and its morbid truths. Can he stop this crafter of vile deception and a miracle potion?

Also includes **The Haunted Chamber** by The Dutchess. 350 pages.

Old Electricity, The Lightning Detective; Or, Through By Night



The worst of all plunderers in the nation, malicious mail and express train robbers, have frustrated Indiana law enforcement for too long. The best thief-taker in Washington's secret service force, detective Wayne Winthrop, fell among them, unawares, while in disguise. A mission to derail their murderous cartel is formulated right there in the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad station, Vincennes, Indiana.

His reputation among criminals is well earned. The superstitious detail him as being in league with spirits of the air, or with the devil himself. Some say he disappears mysteriously as he appears, sometimes to roar and flash of thunder and lightning. They call him *Old Electricity*. A master of disguise, a skilled forger and a dabbler in phrenology.

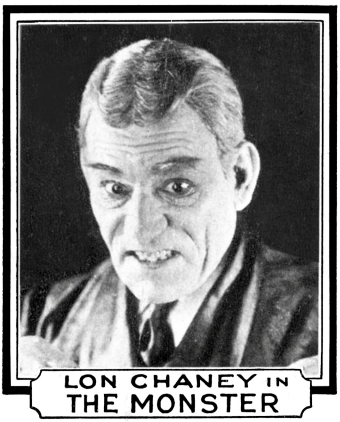
Can Wayne Winthrop break the death grip of their lethal crime sprees, or will it be he who goes before *Judge Lynch*, strung up by the neck in a hangman's noose?

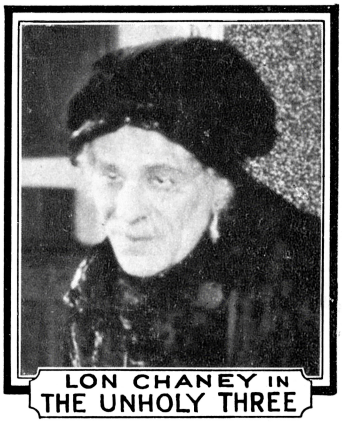
Copyrighted in 1881, *Old Electricity, The Lightning Detective; Or, Through By Night* was originally published in 1885's *Old Sleuth Library*. In 1892 it was considerably expanded into a novel. This is the version preserved in this edition. 418 pages.

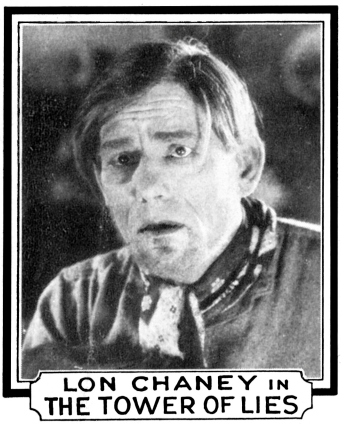
THIS EDITION OF "THE MOCKING BIRD" WAS CROWDFUNDED ON KICKSTARTER.COM WITH HELP FROM THESE CONTRIBUTORS.

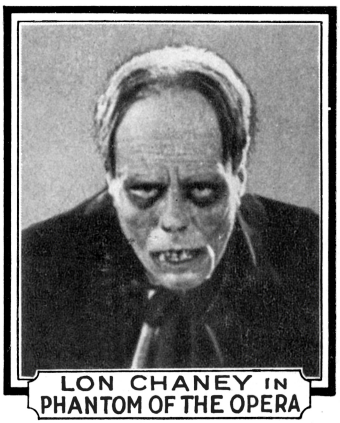
The Unholy Forty Eight

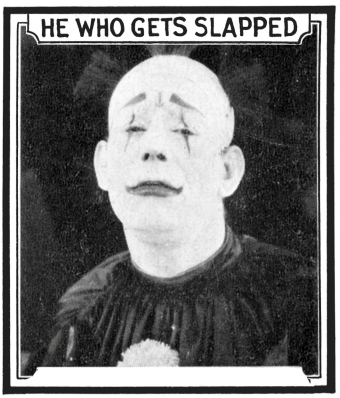
Saul Alvarez
Dan Atwell
B. Ault
John Bax
BJW
Michael R. Brown
Christopher Davis
Daniel Joseph Deleon
Pops Feibel
Zack Fissel
Lori & Maurice Forrester
David L. Gill
David Greenberg
Tim Greenshields
David Guiot
Everett Haagsma
Dave Holets
Eileen Hunter
Rick (RJDiogenes) Hutchins
Steve Joyce
Jennifer Keenan
Robert Knot
David Kossian
Gregg Littlejohn
Will Lorenzo
Keith and Cheri Martin
John Medville
Catherine S. Mitchell
Chelle Anna Moon
John Ozmen
Gian Petersen
Zasu Pitts
Jim Reid
Robert Riley-Mercado
J. M. Shelledy
K. L. Stokes
Greg Trawinski
Zachary Tredwell
Tim Tucker
Henry Tufts
Irene Turner
Jo Uhrich
Stella Waldvogel
R. A. Ward
Stephen M. Wolterstorff
Sean Wozniak
Lee Wrona
Gerry Zaninovich











Popular Screen Library #2
Published by Giant Squid
Audio Lab Company